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PORTRAIT OF MADAME BLAVATSKY

Taken by Beardsley, of Ithaca, N.Y., in 1875, at the time of the Ithaca visit.

SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

BY

EUGENE ROLLIN CORSON

B.S., M.D.

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TO

MRS. WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

THE DEVOTED FRIEND AND ADMIRER

OF MY FATHER

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I WISH to thank my cousin Anna McClure Sholl for valuable aid in the preparation of this book.

E. R. C.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE publication of private letters which were never meant for publication, and which it was never imagined would reach the public, demands an explanation if not an apology. In these days of many books, when the intimate lives of noted characters are scrutinized and dissected for every bit of information to satisfy a public more eager, apparently, to discover the sins and frailties of the great than to form a just appreciation of their genius and finer qualities, one may well pause before adding to this great mass of literature.

If, on the contrary, the publication of this private material may throw some light on certain mooted points of value, clear the air of scandal or unjust criticism, or even of violent abuse, no apology is called for. The world seems ever ready to magnify the evil and minimize the good in human nature, especially in those who have attained greatness, as we understand the word, or at least a certain prominence from public office and public trust. The finer Christian charity which is never blind to the sins and follies and weaknesses of human nature, yet treats them with gentleness, a gentleness ever ready to pardon, as though conscious that the human spirit has in it ever the promise and potency of ultimate redemption and glorification. This is, of course, the Christ-spirit, and when the world

fails to recognize it or forgets it, distrust and dread and pessimism prevail, and the general outlook on life presents a very dreary picture.

Fortunately a trend towards a healthy optimism prevails, and there is no better index of an advancing and higher civilization than the larger scope of this optimism.

In John Forster's *Decision of Character* he stressed the importance for the young man to meet the world with trust rather than distrust, and I am quite sure that this rule of life is the proper one. Confidence belongs to the higher attributes of man, and suspicion to the lower nature; truth is born of faith, while error is the child of distrust and suspicion.

This seems to apply with special aptness to the writer of these letters: adored by her followers and by those who understood her, no term of abuse seemed too severe for those who called her a charlatan.

Had I not thought that these letters would help to clear up certain mooted questions, and vindicate her against certain charges of duplicity and lack of good faith, and even against more serious charges, I should not have published them.

E. R. C.

Adyar
1931.

SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY

H.P.B.'s GOOD FAITH

H.P.B. on the title-page of *Isis Unveiled* has a saying of Montaigne's: "Cecy est un livre de bonne foy." This is not a mere idle choice for a motto; it comes from the very heart of the woman. Nor have I seen any of her writings, no matter how much I may criticize them, no matter how much they may be open to criticism generally, where I felt she was acting a part, or in any writing for mere effect, or for any display of knowledge or learning. The woman was genuine, genuine in her pleasantest moods, genuine in her anger and rage when wrought up to the highest pitch by her tempestuous emotions. Again and again in her writings does she express her contempt and abhorrence for a lie; she even has spoken of it as worse than murder, which is carrying her convictions to the highest pitch, and certainly quite too far.

But aside from this mere verbal expression, I can see the same conviction in her actions and general attitude towards the world. Here is a woman born an aristocrat, and in a country where the aristocracy meant more than in any other country. In Russia, where the serfs were not yet

free, the nobility had every privilege and every advantage, and the peasantry every degradation and every hardship. It was champagne and the Court for the aristocrat, and a hovel and black bread for the peasant, though he did have his vodka for some surcease from toil, and for some slight semblance of the mystic consciousness, and for some faint glimpse of the Elysian fields.

When at the outbreak of the War the Czar took away his vodka, it was the last straw to break his back. He had no equipment; he had no vodka; yet a half-drunken soldier was better than a sober one. Nothing could follow this but defeat, and after defeat must come the Revolution; and Red Russia had to go back to its vodka. The peasant could work in the fields all day in the bitter cold, but he had to have his ikon to pray to, and he had to have his vodka.

The Russian novelists have drawn the picture for us in vivid colours, and they can draw and they are colourists.

One of the most interesting facts in modern history is the birth of Russian literature after centuries of comparative silence. It came with a great outburst, with a galaxy of writers, poets and novelists, whose pictures of Russian life and thought were more vivid and more minute and accurate than any other country could boast of. It came almost as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the great poet Pushkin, a passionate romanticist, started a movement which passed rapidly from poetry to the realistic novel. Such names as Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevski, and Tolstoi have brought this immense and almost boundless Russia before our eyes; the

peasant in his hut, the aristocrat in his palace, and the Court in all its gorgeous ceremonies and trappings. They have shown us an aristocracy probably the most dissipated in the world, for its dissipation was reduced to a fine art. In my youth I read the novels of Turgenev, and their characters and their scenes were as of another world. Later I read Tolstoi, and now all the world is reading him, perhaps the greatest genius of them all.

And they have shown us the intellectual side of this marvellous people, their mysticism, their love of philosophy, and their eagerness to grasp all the intricate and subtle questions of life, as manifested in the student, in the soldier, and in the aristocrat.

St. Petersburg becomes for us more alive than Paris, and we might imagine we were in the French capital, for we hear more French than Russian, and wine and song and bejewelled women make us forget the bitter cold outside. It was indeed a land of contrasts.

Years ago the gentle John Ruskin pointed out to us that with war and the military spirit art and literature flourished best, while with peace and security art and literature languished and decayed. Russia is a good example of this: her wars have enriched her literature and art. The pictures of Verestchagin will long live in art; Napoleon's wars at Versailles are tame indeed in contrast.

But we must not forget an aristocracy that claims some nobility, where the intellectual and artistic elements predominated, and fired by a military spirit, along with a certain abandon,

courage, devotion to Czar and country, a sense of duty and responsibility, all inspiring to higher action and endeavour.

Russia up to the Great War was a land of an autocratic Czar with all the traditions of Peter the Great and the great Catherine, with its oriental Court and trappings, its intricate and vicious bureaucracy, its tyranny, its brutality, and its oppression of the poor and humble.

Her religion, too, was a full expression of the national character, rich in imagery, in imagination, in pictorial and architectural art, and of an emotional warmth to fight the bitter cold. It was a Church, oriental, Byzantine, superstitious, mystical, and with a ceremonial outclassing in gorgeousness and pomp Rome herself. It satisfied fully the genius of the race. Red Russia has tried to kill it, but it cannot be destroyed.

Into this land Helena Petrovna Blavatsky was born, and she was born an aristocrat, with riches and serfs and influential connections, and everything to make life easy and successful and coveted. Did she sink into this lap of luxury? Did she care for the conventions about her? Were the family ties strong enough to hold her down? Were riches and bodily comfort and the intellectual allurements then offered her sufficient to hold her and keep her from exile? Her wild spirit and genius, and genius it must be called, would have none of it, though she had to face an outside world as cold and bitter as her own Russian winter, and as cutting as the winds which blow over the great steppes. To the Imperial Court she preferred the Arabs and Bedouins, the wandering tribes of the East in their tents where

she could warm herself by their fires at night and learn their languages, their myths, their religious secrets, their magic incantations, and all their occult imaginings and ceremonies, seeking the great mystery of man's spirit and being.

If she did not find what she was after she found something to help satisfy her cravings, something which she could not find in books or in universities or in any abodes where learning flourished. If for years she had become a wanderer it was to some purpose after all, for the time came when it bore fruit, bitter often though it was, yet in the end luscious and sweet. And what was this fruit but the Cosmic consciousness which comes sometimes without effort, and sometimes after the weary toil of years.

Walt Whitman had it with but little wandering, though he too had to suffer some. Lord Tennyson had a glimpse of it, and has given expression to it; and in some of his poetry it is near enough to the surface to show its presence. With H.P.B. the struggle was so fierce that it left its mark. She was an old woman at forty. The soft lines of youth, a face of beauty and charm, which even her cousin, Count Witte, admits, had hardened into the characteristic Calmuk features, her wonderful eyes alone remaining to charm and attract. She was old, but she was a great woman, a great personality, sometimes as gentle and simple as a child, and sometimes a raging lioness turning on the yelping curs at her heels.

But we must not forget that all her powers did not come through a severe struggle alone; far from it. Even in her youth Count Witte testifies: "She could write pages of smoothly flowing

verse without the slightest effort, and she could compose essays in prose on every conceivable subject."

Katkov, the famous Moscow editor, praised her great literary talent. We have but to point to *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan* to show it; it's an *ex pede Herculem* judgment, but it is sufficient.

It is impossible to form any idea of the character of H.P.B. unless we regard her as a genius and a great genius at that. To show this I shall in a separate chapter turn to the characterization of genius as given us by F. W. H. Myers, who was one of the committee of the S.P.R. to brand her as a charlatan. Her automatisms, her externalizations, and visualizations, her marvellous powers of continued application at her writing-desk, her eccentricities, her emotional storms, her defiance of the ordinary conventions, and even the lack of uniformity in her writings, all bring out the very points which Professor Myers has so eloquently treated.

It is in her polemical writings that we see her fearless and outspoken nature. There is no pretence here; there is no lack of good faith; she means every word she writes. Her opponent may be the élite of the élite among scholars, under the aegis of a great university; it matters not; she does not hesitate. Doctor Jowett does not escape; she admits his great scholarship, but she always shows that he translated Plato for the love of the Greek and not for his understanding of Plato's philosophy. Nor does Max Müller escape her criticism when he denied that there was any secret doctrine in the religions of the

East. Her article on "Mr. A. Lillie's Delusion" is one of the best of her polemical writings, and has a charm for its incisive sarcasm and biting denunciation of this gentleman's attempt to show what he considers her inconsistencies, and even misstatements regarding herself and her past. She made Mr. Lillie a wilted lily before she got through with him.

In all her writings, whether in the calm statements of her occult and philosophical expositions or in her polemical writings, you feel that right or wrong she is honest. It is all in good faith; there is never any subterfuge; there is no beating the devil around the bush; she is out in the open, and her opponents who are hiding in their holes must get out and face her. And when enraged by the taunts and abuses of her enemies she becomes a Samson Agonistes, ready to pull down the temple on her enemies as well as on herself and destroy all in its ruins. Such a titanic creature is fearless, and her very fearlessness has a basic honesty that knows no lack of faith, and therefore brooks no lack of it in others. Lesser minds and weaker natures may charge her with follies and weaknesses and lack of faith, but they do not understand her.

Yet she suffers from it all and raves, and still goes on her way, and when she reaches the end of the way she falls in her own tracks, but she falls triumphant. She may have lost the fight for the time, but her heart has still the courage and the exultant joy of a future justification, even though that future may be far off.

Unfortunately a number of her letters deal with the sordid question of the Holmes's controversy,

but one can easily see that she is fighting for the truth and anxious to pour the vial of her wrath on the guilty party. The reading of her articles in *The Spiritual Scientist*, where this controversy is fully discussed, may prove of interest in connection with the letters, but in both instances her good faith is in evidence. She never changed one iota in her attitude towards modern spiritualism. I am quite free to admit that she probably overstated the dangers and pitfalls of modern mediumistic spiritualism. Though she repeatedly attacked the Catholic Church for many abuses, as she thought them, the Church has really for centuries deprecated all attempts to get in touch with the spirit-world for fear of the very dangers she so earnestly warned against. It is only the phenomena and miracles of sainthood which the Church has treasured and encouraged, but they have been very different from the phenomena of the séance room, even when these have all the semblance of good faith.

The whole character of the movement has changed since her day, and it is not impossible that her memory will take on a more gentle and a more serene aspect. She fought when all is said the materialism of the last century, and when materialism had reached its nadir. The world can well thank her for that.

The molecular and mathematical physics of to-day is a new science as compared with the physics of John Tyndall and Herbert Spencer. The scientific use of the imagination has carried us to the ultimate confines of the state of matter. And now we will not stop at the atom, for a very great scientist, Sir J. J. Thomson, who first

calculated the electric charge on the electron, has just published a lecture on "Beyond the Electron," in which he shows that the electron itself has its etheric body-guards, and pure spirit itself cannot be far off. Mme. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine* tells us that "light is matter," and Sir J. J. Thomson in the lecture I have mentioned says that we are returning to the corpuscular theory of light—and Einstein's relativity is certainly favouring that theory—and that light is both corpuscular and undulatory. The mathematical physicists are really more spiritual in a way than the churchmen; the tables are turned, the latter have become the materialists.

In the recent silly vapourings of many modern Protestant writers on the conflict between science and religion, it is the Catholic Church which is now receiving the decrees of science and declaring there is no conflict—witness the recent pronouncement of Cardinal Hayes. In all the foolish squabbles of the Protestant churches about evolution,—and we can see at the basis of it the crass ignorance of the masses who profess Churchianity rather than Christianity,—the Catholic Church has remained silent. *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra.*

Whatever the mistakes of H.P.B., and they were many, they cannot diminish the power and the radiance of her genius; and of her mistakes, bad faith was not one; and all she wrote can well come under the motto of *Isis Unveiled*: "Cecy est un livre de bonne foy."

THE VISIT TO ITHACA

AMONG my father's papers I found a letter from Olcott which gives us the date, or about the date, when H.P.B. arrived in Ithaca. It was written from his office at 7 Beekman Street, New York, and dated September 14th, 1875.

PROFESSOR H. CORSON.

DEAR SIR,

Madame Blavatsky will probably go to Albany by to-morrow (Wednesday) evening's boat, spend the day, or a part of it, in Albany, and then proceed onward to Ithaca. If there is any train Westward at night by taking which she can arrive at your place in the morning I shall advise her choosing it; otherwise she had better start earlier in the day and get to Ithaca by bed-time.

I requested her to write to you herself and she promised to do so, but she is so absorbed with the things of the other world that, with good intentions she may forget her duty, so I concluded to drop you a line myself from my office.

With compliments to Mrs. Corson, and kind regards to Mr. Anthony,

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours truly,

(signed) H. S. OLCOTT.

This would make her arrival in Ithaca about September 17th, 1875.

Referring to *Old Diary Leaves* I find that there was a meeting of the Theosophical Society on September 13th, 1875. There was another meeting of the T.S. on October 16th, at which H.P.B. was present, so that she must have visited Ithaca between these dates, an interval of about four weeks.

At that time my father had a cottage known as the Richardson Cottage, on Heustis Street, not far from a much more pretentious house on Buffalo Street where we had lived for three years, and also close to a much finer home and grounds he shortly afterwards bought and moved into known as Cascadilla Cottage. Here he lived many years up to the time of his death in 1911; it is from Cascadilla Cottage that his books are dated.

The climate of Ithaca is a very severe and trying one, very cold and blustery in the winter when the icy winds blow down off the Great Lakes and when the sun rarely shines. But at the time when H.P.B. visited Ithaca the weather is usually fine. In October there is the Indian Summer; the trees have put on their autumn tints, the mornings and nights are crisp and frosty, with a pleasant warmth in the middle of the day, with the distant hills and lake bathed in the late summer haze. The general outlook is very beautiful. Ithaca proper is in the valley at the foot of Cayuga Lake, and is built up on the east, west, and south hills, with the outskirts heavily wooded. My father's home was on the east hill, probably three to four hundred feet above the valley. On this hill the University stands, an

imposing array of noble buildings—lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, and professors' homes. An interesting feature of the landscape are the gorges, with their steep banks, with their foaming waters tumbling over the rocks on their way to the lake; so that to a lover of scenery the prospect was an entrancing one, full of colour, the golden-rod in its glory, massed with the purple composite flowers, and the ripening grapes of the many vineyards dotting all the hills.

I mention this *mise en scène*, because H.P.B. saw it not. If she saw any part of it from the window or the porch she made no mention of it; it did not hold her; it did not attract her or change the current of her thoughts.

One day my father said to her: "It is a pity, Madame, for you not to see the beauties around you. I want to give you a carriage drive that you may see the University buildings and the lovely country." She finally consented to go, but my father begged her not to smoke in the carriage because the people were not used to it, and it would give them a bad impression and might cause comment, especially with a staid university professor. To this she also reluctantly consented. But before the drive was over, Madame said she would have to smoke a cigarette, she could not stand it a minute longer, and begged that she might get out of the carriage and sit on a stone on a side of the road and smoke in comfort. If the country people took her for a gypsy, why not, what harm would it do? So there sat the author of *Isis Unveiled* and the *Secret Doctrine*, satisfied with her own thoughts and oblivious of everything around her, even the waiting horses and coachman

and the carriage with its occupants. Perhaps it was less the tobacco she wanted than the desire to be alone with herself and her own thoughts. When the cigarettes were finished she returned to the carriage and they continued on their drive.

My father dwelt especially on this incident as showing the woman's preoccupation. As he repeatedly said to me: "Never have I seen such an intense creature, intense in her purpose, intense in her endeavour; nothing around her mattered; though the heavens fall she would keep on her way."

It has always been a regret of my life that I did not meet her at that time. Having graduated at Cornell in June of that year, in September I was in Philadelphia studying medicine, with my mind full of my studies, and certainly with no thought of the events at home. I have to rely on what my father and mother told me subsequently, and in the fifty years or more which have gone by I can only recall the chief incidents of the visit.

In her dress she wore mostly a loose wrapper with a sort of embroidered jacket, as my mother described it to me, with the cigarette papers in one pocket and the tobacco in the other. My father, who was a great smoker himself and a judge of tobacco, thought her brand a cheap kind; perhaps her lack of money accounted for it. The cigarettes were countless, and the flower-pots were full of the stubs.

She had an elaborate robe, which shows well in the photograph taken by Beardsley.

She spent her time at her desk, writing, writing, writing most of the day and way into the night,

carrying on a huge correspondence by long letters. Here she started *Isis Unveiled*, writing about twenty-five closely written foolscap pages a day. She had no books to consult ; my father's very extensive library was almost wholly on English literature, Early English, Anglo-Saxon, English poetry, and classic literature, and she rarely consulted him about anything.

On one occasion she asked him for a Greek word on some text in the New Testament, and when my father said he could not remember it but would look it up for her at once, she said to him, half irritated and half joking : " You school-boy ! Why, don't you know it ? " My father got the Greek for her, and she went on with her writing.

The incident is interesting in connection with a somewhat similar one mentioned by G. R. S. Mead, and may well bear being quoted here. He had received a pressing telegram from H.P.B. from the Island of Jersey, where she was editing *Lucifer* and writing the *Secret Doctrine*, and carrying on this same voluminous correspondence.

He writes : " One of the greatest proofs to me of H.P.B.'s extraordinary gifts and ability, if proof were needed in the face of the manifest sincerity of her life-work, was the way in which she wrote her articles and books. I knew every book she had in her small library, and yet day after day she would produce quantities of MS. abounding in quotations, which were seldom inaccurate. I remember almost the last day she sat at her desk, going into her room to query two Greek words in a quotation, and telling her they were inaccurate. Now, though H.P.B. could in

her early years speak modern Greek and had been taught ancient Greek by her grandmother, she had long forgotten it for all purposes of accuracy, and the correction of the words I objected to required precise scholarship. "Where did you get it from, H.P.B.?" I asked. "I'm sure I don't know, my dear," was her rather discouraging rejoinder, "I saw it!" adding that she was certain she was right, for now she remembered when she wrote the particular passage referred to. However, I persuaded her that there was some mistake, and finally she said: "Well, of course you are a great Greek pundit, I know, but you are not going to sit upon me always. I'll try if I can see it again, and now get out," meaning that she wanted to go on with her work, or at any rate had had enough of me. About two minutes afterwards she called me in again and presented me with a scrap of paper on which she had written the two words quite correctly, saying: "Well, I suppose you'll be a greater pundit than ever after this!"[1]

This incident is of value here as partly showing the way she wrote.

To try to explain her writings by citing the books from which she quoted, or from which she may have gotten her thoughts, is about as sensible as trying to understand the genius of Shakespeare from the books he may have read or glanced at. But no theories or fancies can be too ridiculous or extravagant for those who have no imagination and no intuitions, and who will grasp any theory

[1] From "The Last Two Years," by G. R. S. Mead, F.T.S., in the pamphlet entitled: *In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: by Some of her Pupils.* Published by the Theosophical Publishing Society of London. 1891.

to solve a problem beyond their understanding. Witness the Baconian theory of Shakespeare, which of all attempts to explain his genius is the most ridiculous. No true student or lover of Shakespeare could for a moment accept it ; only the literary grubbers who love to count the p's and q's could have imagined any such silly evasion of the real mystery.

There are some facts we now know positively, namely, the marvels of certain forms of automatic writing, of clairvoyant writing, the automatisms and the visualizations of genius, and while not the ultimate solution of the mystery by any means, at least gets us on the way, and saves us from the quagmires and quicksands of crass materialism. *Isis Unveiled* and the *Secret Doctrine* and the other voluminous writings of H.P.B. may be full of mistakes and be shockingly lacking in style and literary precision, and yet be the work of genius, and live long after the scholarly and literary quidnuncs have had their day. When Shakespeare introduced lions into the Forest of Arden he did not hurt his genius, but helped us to wonder at it and admire it the more.

There is the best of evidence, as good or better than any put forth by the S.P.R. in its various excursions into psychical research, that H.P.B. did not simply copy out of books what she wanted to write about, as we ordinary mortals would do, but that she got her copy automatically or clairvoyantly, or " saw it in the astral," which is as good as any way to describe it. No matter how we call it, or how we describe it, we do not get much closer to the mystery itself. It was the easiest and most obvious way to understand how

she wrote in Ithaca the beginning of *Isis Unveiled*. She had no books to consult in my father's library ; and certainly he could not help her at the task.

But quite aside from any evidence during her visit at Ithaca, many very reliable witnesses have repeatedly testified to her writing without the books before her or within her grasp. Olcott, who was longest associated with her intimately, who followed her by day while she wrote *Isis Unveiled*, and much of her other writing, can testify that she wrote automatically or clairvoyantly. She herself never took any credit for what she wrote, but always insisted that she was simply the amanuensis. If this was an isolated case we might well pause and doubt, but we have very good evidence from many sources dating back from the very beginning of psychical research, that direct writing, automatic and clairvoyant writing, on subjects unknown and foreign to the automatist have been produced.

As an example of this and applicable here, I quote the following. In *The Annals of Psychical Science*, Professor Charles Richet published his very careful experiments with Madame X, whose automatic writing brought the entire subject definitely and strikingly before psychical researchers. She wrote in Greek, a language unknown to her, and Professor Richet was able to trace all of it to its sources. He writes : " But what truly strikes us is the almost absolute correctness of the text : this accuracy is probably highly superior to that of which students after two years' study of the language would be capable.

"Finally, the adaption is perfect between the ideas expressed, as, after the fine words which St. John gives to Christ, there is written: *I can do no more . . . I have finished my work . . . it is the end.* These words are written in quite a different text, and in almost another language—the text of Byzantios and modern Greek.

"I think there is no need to dwell longer upon the variety of Greek phrases thus given. We have not only phrases from the Dictionary of Byzantios (Preface, Dedication, Lexicon), but also quotations from Plato (Apology for Socrates and Phædrus), and these long quotations from the Gospel of John: that is to say, we have quotations from four distinctly different works, and *always*—the given phrase—as I have several times pointed out—is admirably adapted to the conditions of the time being."[1]

This paper was presented to the English S.P.R., and it is interesting to note how it was received. Sir Oliver Lodge regarded the writing as copying something actually before her, or else of type mentally seen in a manner something analogous to a crystal vision. Sir Oliver not only has the caution of the great scientist but he also has vision. Mrs. Verall, Mr. Feilding, and Miss Johnson hemmed and hawed over it and, strongly suspicious of fraud, could come to no conclusion. They were not scientists, but smart people whose incredulity was their stock-in-trade.

I shall consider this subject more fully in a subsequent chapter, especially in relationship to the charges of fraud brought against H.P.B.

This form of psychical literature has been

[1] *The Annals of Psychical Science*, January to March, 1909.

growing by leaps and bounds, and to the psychical researcher has become of great interest.

With all of this before us, to ignore its application to much at least of H.P.B.'s writings is to allow prejudice and animosity, and the conceits and self-sufficiency of mere scholarship, to cloud all reasonable investigation.

And now for another incident of the Ithaca visit.

My mother described to me how H.P.B. would sit down at the piano and improvise with great skill, showing a remarkable efficiency for one who played but at odd times as the spirit might move her. Her biographers have not dwelt at any length on her musical talent. Her cousin, Count Witte, in his *Memoirs*,[1] refers to this musical talent at some length and with some detail, although he was wholly out of sympathy with her and does not hesitate to speak of the follies and sins of her youth—if they were sins—in strong and very plain language.[1]

Count Witte writes: "They learned from the papers that she gave pianoforte concerts in London and Paris, and afterwards became the manager of the royal choir, maintained by King Milan of Serbia. . . . A self-taught musician, she was able to give pianoforte concerts in London and Paris, and although entirely ignorant of the theory of music, she conducted a large orchestra."

My mother on several occasions spoke of the charm of her playing.

To H.P.B. many incidents in her eventful and

[1] *The Memoirs of Count Witte.* Translated from the original Russian manuscript and edited by Abraham Yarmolinsky. pp. 4–10. 1921.

stormy life during her younger days were a sealed book to her friends and acquaintances. In a casual way she mentioned to my mother that she had fought in Garibaldi's army and had slept in the Pontine marshes. This seemed to her an extraordinary statement, and she had at the time no way to corroborate it. In "A Modern Panarion,"[1] from an article in *Light*, 1884, entitled "Mr. A. Lillie's Delusions," she wrote: "Lest Mr. Lillie should take my omitting to answer a single one of his very indiscreet questions as a new pretext for printing some impertinence, I say: I *was* at Mentana during the battle in October, 1867, and left Italy in November of the same year for India. Whether I was *sent* there, or found myself there by accident, are questions that pertain to my private life, with which, it appears to me, Mr. Lillie has no concern. But this is on a par with his other ways of dealing with his opponents."

Another reference to this incident may still further enhance its interest. Olcott, in *Old Diary Leaves*, has given us a more detailed account of this incident. "While she was at Chittenden she told me many incidents of her past life, among others, her having been present as a volunteer, with a number of other European ladies, with Garibaldi at the bloody battle of Mentana.[2] In proof of her story she showed me where her left arm had been broken in two places by a sabre

[1] *A Modern Panarion.* A collection of fugitive fragments from the pen of H. P. Blavatsky. First edition, Vol. I. London, 1895.

[2] Mentana, thirteen miles N.E. of Rome, noted from the battle which took place there November 3rd, 1867. On this occasion Garibaldi himself was taken prisoner. See Johnson's Universal Encyclopædia, article, "Mentana."

stroke, and made me feel in her right shoulder a musket bullet still imbedded in the muscle, and another in the leg. She also showed me a scar just below the heart where she had been stabbed with a stiletto. This wound reopened a little while she was at Chittenden, and it was to consult me about it that she was led to show it to me. She told me many curious tales of peril and adventure, among them the story of the phantom African sorcerer with the oryx-horn coronet, whom she had seen in life doing phenomena in Upper Egypt many years before."

H.P.B.'s phenomena with a few exceptions were not a feature of her visit. She showed the raps as produced by her will-power sometimes through a stack of hands, and again on different parts of the room. My father was familiar with this phenomenon in the séance room through the ordinary medium, but was much more impressed when produced by conscious will-power. On another occasion he had asked if she could place me and tell what I was doing, then a student of medicine in Philadelphia, and she gave him an accurate account of where I was and what was taking place. It happened to be that I was visiting my preceptor on Green Street. She said I was much under his influence, which was true, and a very good influence it was too. On another occasion she caused a heavy table to rise up in the air without touching it, and she repeatedly said that this was all due to her will-power, and was not to be classed with the ordinary mediumistic phenomena.

One evening a frost was predicted, and my mother was anxious to get in her potted plants

from the porch, when H.P.B. told her not to worry, and she would get "John" to bring them in. So they went to bed without any concern, and in the morning all the plants were found inside.

I mention these incidents, not that I think them of much importance at this late day, but because these phenomena became a part of her activities, both in New York and India and later in Europe. In the fifty years and more which have gone by they have become but a faint memory, and are not, of course, evidential.

But another incident deserves a much more detailed description, both on account of its striking character and because it can be checked up with similar happenings which are more evidential.

It happened in this way. One evening my father had called on Andrew D. White, the President of the University. There was a most cordial relationship existing between him and my father and mother. They were often guests at his table to meet many distinguished people. On this occasion my father was seated by a table in Dr. White's study, and as they talked my father was mechanically fingering some notepaper by his side, and himself a lover of fine stationery, he picked it up and noticed the watermark. In due time he returned home, and found that my mother and Mme. Blavatsky had retired to their rooms, so he went up to bed. In his room he always had a small table and lamp by his bedside. On the table were placed a number of books which he was in the habit of reading before he went to sleep. On awaking in the morning he was astonished to find on the table a portrait of my

sister in black and white. It was a striking likeness; there was a chaplet of flowers in her hair, hanging down her back. She was in the habit of having her photograph taken in this way, the only difference being the wreath of flowers in her hair. Now, in the background there were faint outlines of the faces of gnomes or sprites. My father noticed at once it was the same paper and the same watermark which he had seen at Dr. White's. He rushed to my mother greatly excited to show her the picture. When she looked at it she exclaimed: "This is the work of the devil," burst out crying, and threw it in the fire, to the great regret and sorrow of my father. Mme. Blavatsky was all protestation and apology and sorrow that she should have hurt my mother's feelings, saying further, that she had done it thinking it would give them pleasure.

As may be seen by H.P.B.'s letter, she herself was much wrought up over the incident, and declares that in the future she will resist the temptation to repeat the phenomenon under similar circumstances.

As an offset to this incident, and to help show its genuineness, I wish to copy from *Old Diary Leaves* Olcott's description of a precipitated picture under very dissimilar circumstances. Olcott gives the photograph of the original picture, and the copy of it by precipitation; all the circumstances in the case are of great interest, and impress me as very evidential.

Olcott writes: "H.P.B. had naturally but small pity for intellectual weaklings, especially for the stubborn dupes of mediumistic trickery, and she often poured out the vials of her wrath

upon the, as she called her, purblind old maid. One cold evening (Dec. 1st, 1875) after a fresh day of failures at Mr. Mason's laboratory, Mlle. Liebert was, as usual, shuffling over her grimy photographs, sighing and arching her eyebrows into an expression, when H.P.B. burst out: 'Why will you persist in this folly? Can't you see that all those photographs in your hand were swindles on you by photographers who did them to rob you of your money? You have had every possible chance now to prove your pretended power—more than one hundred chances have been given you, and you have not been able to do the least thing. Where is your pretended guide, Napoleon, and the other sweet angels of Summerland? Why don't they come and help you? Pshaw! it makes me sick to see such credulity. Now see here; I can make a "spirit picture" whenever I like—and of anybody I like. You don't believe it, eh? Well, I shall prove it on the spot!' She hunted up a piece of cardboard, cut it to the size of a cabinet photograph, and then asked Mlle. Liebert whose portrait she wished. 'Do you want me to make your Napoleon?' she asked. 'No,' said Mlle. L., 'please make for me the picture of that beautiful M. Luis.' H.P.B. burst into a scornful laugh, because, by Mrs. Britten's request, I had returned to her through the post the Louis portrait three days previously, and it being by that time in Boston, 250 miles away, the trap set by the French lady was but too evident. 'Ah!' said H.P.B., 'you thought you could catch me, but now see!' She laid the prepared card on the table before Mlle. Liebert and myself, rubbed the palm of her

hand over it three or four times, turned it over, and lo! on the under side we saw (as we then thought) a facsimile of the Louis portrait. In a cloudy background at both sides of the face were grinning elemental sprites, and above the head a shadowy hand with the index finger pointing downward. I never saw amazement more strongly depicted on a human face than it was upon Mlle. Liebert's at that moment. She gazed in positive terror at the mysterious card, and presently burst into tears and hurried out of the room with it in her hand, while H.P.B. and I went into fits of laughter. After a half-hour she returned, gave me the picture, and on retiring for the night I placed it as a bookmark in a volume I was reading in my own apartment. On the back I noted the date and the names of the three witnesses. The next morning I found that the picture had quite faded out, all save the name 'Louis,' written at the bottom in imitation of the original; the writing a precipitation made simultaneously with the portrait and the elves in the background. That was a curious fact—that one part of a precipitated picture should remain visible, while all the rest had disappeared, and I cannot explain it. I locked it up in my drawer, and Mr. Judge, dropping in a day or two later, or, perhaps, the same evening, I told him the story and showed him the defaced card; whereupon he asked H.P.B. to 'fix' it. It needed but a moment to lay the card again face down upon the table, cover it with her hand, and reproduce the picture as it had been. He took it by her permission, and kept it until we met him in Paris in 1884, when—as he had fortunately brought it

with him—I begged it of him for the Adyar Library. From Paris I crossed over to London, and going one evening to dine with my friend, Stainton Moses, he showed me his collection of mediumistic curios, *among others, the very original of the Louis picture which I had returned to Mrs. Britten by post from New York to Boston in* 1876! On the back was written 'M. A. Oxon, March 1, 1877, from the Author of *Art Magic* and *Ghostland*.' The next day I brought and showed Stainton Moses the H.P.B. copy, and he kindly gave me the original. Thus, after the lapse of eight years, both came back to my hand. Upon comparing them we found so many differences as to show conclusively that the one was not a duplicate of the other. To begin with, the faces look in opposite directions, as though the one were the enlarged and somewhat deranged reflection of the other in a mirror. When I asked H.P.B. the reason for this she said that all things on the objective plane have their images reversed in the astral light, and that she simply transferred to paper the astral reflection of the Louis picture *as she saw it:* the minuteness of its accuracy would depend upon the exactness of her clairvoyant perception. Applying this test to these two pictures, we find that there are material differences in horizontal and vertical measurements throughout, as well as in the curl of the hair and beard and the outlines of the dress; the 'Louis' signatures also vary in all details while preserving a general resemblance. When the copy was precipitated, the tint was infused into the surface of the whole card as a sort of pigmentous blur, just as the background still remains,

and H.P.B. touched up some of the main lines with a lead pencil; to the artistic improvement of the picture, but to its detriment as an exhibit of occult photography."

I wish to quote from *Old Diary Leaves* one more instance of this strange phenomenon. Olcott wrote: "Another example, perhaps even more interesting, is the following: Under date of December 22, 1887, Stainton Moses wrote her a five-paged letter of a rather controversial, or, at any rate, critical character. The paper was of square, full letter size, and bore the embossed heading, 'University College, London,' and near the left hand upper corner his monogram,—a W and M interlaced and crossed by the name 'Stainton' in small capitals. She said we must have a duplicate of this too, so I took from the desk five half-sheets of foreign letter-paper of the same size as Oxon's and gave her them. She laid them against the five pages of his letter, and then placed the whole in a drawer of the desk just in front of me as I sat. We went on with our conversation for some time, until she said she thought the copy was made and I had better look and see if that were so. I opened the drawer, took out the papers, and found that one page of each of my five pieces had received from the page with which it was in contact the impression of that page. So nearly alike were the original and the copies that I thought them—as the reader recollects I did the copy of the Britten-Louis portrait—exact duplicates. I had been thinking so all these subsequent sixteen years, but since I hunted up the documents for description in this chapter, I see that this is not the case. The writings are

almost duplicates, yet not quite so. They are rather like two original writings by the same hand. If H.P.B. had had time to prepare this surprise for me, the explanation of forgery would suffice to cover the case; but she had not. The whole thing occurred as described, and I submit that it has an unquestionable evidential value as to the problem of her possessing psychical powers. I have tried the test of placing one page over the other to see how the letters and marks correspond. I find they do not, and that is proof, at any rate, that the transfer was not made by the absorption of the ink by the blank sheet from the other; moreover, the inks are different, and Oxon's is not copying ink. The time occupied by the whole phenomenon might have been five or ten minutes, and the papers lay the whole time in the drawer in front of my breast, so there was no trick of taking it out and substituting other sheets for the blank ones I had just then handed to her. Let it pass to the credit of her good name, and help to make the case which her friends would offset against the intemperate slanders circulated against her by her enemies."

The reader will have to examine the photograph of the original letter and compare it with the photograph of the reproduced letter to appreciate fully its evidential character.

I have quoted from *Old Diary Leaves* these two incidents of a precipitated picture and letter to help familiarize the reader with this astounding phenomenon. Even among the ordinary mediumistic phenomena there are many well-attested cases of "direct" writing, so-called, which can only be regarded as a process of precipitation;

there is no other word which seems to fit the case as well. Unless we knew the real method of its production any attempt to characterize it properly is vain. It is too obscure and occult to explain it in any way with all our vaunted science, and we may well be proud of how much has been attained. Certainly the conditions differ greatly in its production in comparing the ordinary mediumistic process with the one employed by H.P.B., although ultimately the process may be the same. The repetition of the phenomenon may better familiarize us with it, and under test conditions more firmly establish its reality, yet we are still far from grasping the secret. The passage of matter through matter is thoroughly verified by many scientific men, among whom I may mention Sir William Crookes and Prof. Zöllner, yet the mystery remains. We know, however, that there must be some process of de-materialization, but how this is done we can have no conception. The de-materialization of matter by the chemist and the physicist, the changing of a solid into a gas, and vice versa, seems to-day quite natural, yet the process in the séance room is very different. We can only look to the future for more light.

I have quoted from Olcott because I think him honest and very intelligent, and I am quite convinced that he is not the dupe of H.P.B., as declared by the Society of Psychical Research. I have seen too many flagrant mistakes and, I must add, unpardonable mistakes by this body, not to receive with caution any pronouncement they may put forth. Scholarship and the academic spirit by no means qualify one to be a psychical researcher in the true sense of the word ;

there are other psychical qualities necessary; we require the psyche for the psychics. Scholarship is all right for the elucidation of an obscure Greek text, or a problem in mathematics, but there are other qualities necessary when we go deeper down into the depths.

We must not forget that the so-called physical phenomena are just as mysterious as the psychical ones proper, to try to solve which we must go down just as deep into the depths. The S.P.R. has dealt very little with this part of the problem, and what it has attempted has not been to its credit. It is to workers outside that sacred precinct to whom we are indebted for a much larger part of the literature on the subject; this indebtedness is also largely due to the French and Italian workers.

According to H.P.B.'s letter she must have left for New York the day after the portrait incident.

H.P.B. AND SPIRITUALISM

My father's acquaintance and correspondence with Mme. Blavatsky came about in this way. On July 15th, 1874, my sister died, my father's only daughter, and the blow to him was very great. In the religion of the Churches he found no comfort, and he turned to spiritualism for some sign and assurance of the continued existence of his child. In the end he believed that this sign had come to him, and the assurance of his daughter's continued life became very strong. The literature of spiritualism which had grown by leaps and bounds from the time of the "Rochester Knockings," appealed to him as well as his own experience in the séance room. It was all a great comfort to him, a comfort which grew with the years when he most needed it, and which culminated in the publication of his *Spirit Messages*.

H.P.B.'s[1] appearance in this country first became generally known after her visit to the Eddy brothers in Chittenden, Vermont, when she published her experiences at the séances of these mediums. Olcott first met her there, and his graphic description of this meeting became good copy for the newspapers. In an article in *The New York Graphic* she attacked Dr. Beard for his article against the Eddy brothers as mere

[1] It has been the custom to speak of Madame Blavatsky by her initials H.P.B., and I think this custom advisable here.

frauds and tricksters. This brought her more publicity, and my father wrote to her to find out the real state of affairs, and evidently to learn more about this remarkable woman. It would have been interesting to see my father's letters to her, but the general character of them can be partly gleaned from her letters.

Her letters, always interesting and voluminous, had so increased his interest in her, that he and my mother invited her to be their guest at their home in Ithaca. My father at that time was professor of Anglo-Saxon and English literature at Cornell University, and had been there since 1870. He was a fine scholar, of wide interests, and had become a great authority and teacher, and especially on English poetry, a reputation which was to grow with the years, and which was to make him a great figure and personality in the University. My mother, who was French, herself a fine scholar of the most varied interests, became interested in spiritualism in a moderate way only; it never possessed her as it did my father. She had accepted the loss of her daughter with great composure and resignation, and her interest in H.P.B. was more in the woman herself than in her doctrines and mission. My mother, however, was not interested in occultism; on the contrary, she was greatly opposed to it, and we have a direct proof of this in the way she received the precipitated portrait of my sister.

My mother afterwards entered the Catholic Church, where she found great peace and comfort. She died in 1901 at the convent in Rochester, where she was in the habit of going at odd times for rest and retreat.

While H.P.B. left our home for New York after a visit of a month, outwardly friendly on my parents' part, and certainly friendly on H.P.B.'s, I think there was an unexpressed feeling of constraint. This did not interfere with some correspondence between them after H.P.B.'s return to New York and the founding of the Theosophical Society. In one letter she states that she had written three times without receiving an answer, and wonders if they are displeased with her.

Unless one were in full sympathy with the doctrines and teachings of this marvellous woman, her cyclonic temperament, her disregard of many of the conventions of ordinary life, and the many hours she spent writing at her desk, practically the whole day and half the night, precluded her from taking any part in the everyday life about her, or showing any interest in anything outside the one vital interest in her absorbing subject; and while my parents were wholly absorbed in their literary work, they still took a very active part in the society of the University and in its general interests, and may have felt that H.P.B. could at least for a little while have given a part of her time to the life of the University about her. She may have realized she had only sixteen years longer to live, and that she had an immense work before her. She seemed to be working against time; all else was nothing to her; she would have none of it.

To explain more fully the letters I must consider at some length the estrangement, temporary at least, between her and my father.

The founding of the Theosophical Society was of course conceived and accomplished by H.P.B.;

her great mind and personality made it a going concern throughout her life, stormy as that life was destined to be. Even after her death her followers have continued the movement with almost equal energy and success. I have not kept in touch with this movement, and do not know really its exact status to-day. The entrance of Mrs. Annie Besant into the Society was a large factor in its continued existence; and I must not forget the heroic and successful efforts of Colonel Olcott. Her fine mind and her gracious personality, her extensive knowledge gained from personal contact with H.P.B., and her full sympathy with her teachings, made her work of great influence in all the branches of the Society.

H.P.B.'s selection of Olcott as her co-worker was a large part of the success of the Society in the first ten years of its existence. Yet in the first three years, up to the departure of its founders for India, the Society gave little promise of its future prominence. In 1877 *Isis Unveiled* was published, and was at once recognized by the public as a striking manifesto of the aims of the Society. It had, in spite of its many defects from a literary standpoint, an unmistakable power of attraction to a subject which was practically unknown to the general public.

The first great mistake that the Society made, and which was probably its greatest mistake throughout its history, was its pronounced antagonism to spiritualism as it was at that time constituted both in this country and in England.

There has been an immense progress since that time in the literature, in the character of the phenomena, and in a more critical attitude

PORTRAIT OF H. P. B.

Photographer unknown; taken in New York about 1874 by a so-called "spirit photographer." There is a faint "extra" near the upper left-hand corner.

towards the investigation of the entire field of psychical research. The mental attitude was saner, and the character of the investigators was better, although there were some great minds associated with the early history of the movement. I am free to admit that the attitude of the Theosophical Society may have had an influence in this improvement. Yet the manner of the opposition, and the introduction of features which were objectionable, if not repulsive at the time, and which were not really necessary, did much to throw discredit on both spiritualism and the Theosophical Society itself. Olcott stressed this opposition in his inaugural address, and there was at once a great reaction, an uproar from the entire body of spiritualists, and from the Press generally a biting ridicule. In a cartoon in *The Chronicle* Olcott is represented on a stage spouting his address, his left hand pointing in the air to some phantom philosopher, and his right hand pointing to "embryonic commissioners," while in front of him stand an audience up to the footlights listening with astonished faces to his outpourings of warnings against the dangers of the séance room.

Under this a quotation from his address reads: "Some of the influences which come through mediums are due to the spirits of departed human beings; some to embryonic men, fœtuses waiting in the womb of our common mother to be born upon this sphere."

I found among my father's papers an Olcott letter to H.P.B., dated September 25th, 1875. In this he writes:

"I hope you were at my lecture last night, for it was fit to make you die of laughter to see how

I pitched into the spirits and elementaries. I mounted the highest hill I could find—so to speak—and waved the sacred banner of the Lodge in their faces. I felt the Brethren there several times. A nice lady friend of Jackson Davis's came up to me after the lecture and mournfully said: 'Colonel, you have given spiritualism its death-blow to-night.' Sothern says it was the boldest speech he ever heard or read about, and he would have talked all night of the glorious event as he calls it. The enclosed report from *The Sun* is very meagre and stupid. Judge Westbrook said if I would print the speech he would take one hundred copies. . . . Things are red-hot here, I tell you. Thank God I have lived long enough to sound the trumpet once for the holy Lodge." I think we may forgive the mistakes of Olcott's early enthusiasm; it was at least genuine.

All of this effervescence was ill-advised at that time. In *Old Diary Leaves* Olcott writes, speaking of his inaugural: "Yet it reads a bit foolish after seventeen years of hard experience." He had become a saner and a wiser man.

Now this was not all Olcott, of course; H.P.B. had much to do with it. Both in her spoken word and in her writings she continually stressed the point of the danger of the ordinary séance except under the most rigid conditions of the medium and the manner of the proceedings. We must admit that the modern critical attitude and methods of psychical research are along the same lines of her caution and warnings.

The idea of the elementals, of undeveloped spirits, of gnomes and sprites and cobalds—the

fairies of the mines and woods—was not only not accepted by the great majority of people, but was unacceptable. These half-human or non-human spirits were considered simply as the hallucinations of a disordered mind, even if described in the ancient tongues or mediæval Latin. Official science, and even psychical research societies, were still more defiant of this form of demonology.

H.P.B. in her attacks upon the materialism of the day did not hesitate to quote from the ancient and mediæval writers in support of these spirit entities. Her books are full of these quotations; full of her subject and eager to refute her opponents she adduced these records as arguments in support of her thesis; attacking fanaticism in the Churches in philosophy, and in the sciences, she failed to see that she was herself a fanatic. The word has lost its noble original meaning and has come to be a term of reproach.

As a matter of fact, the fanatic has come to have a very important function in the world's work and progress, and we owe much to this so-called "insane enthusiasm"; it reaches heights which the cool-headed moderate fails to reach. The great thing is to apply this enthusiasm at the right time, in the right place, and on the right occasion, when it may work wonders.

In her early letters she repeatedly emphasized the fact, that while she was a spiritualist it was not in the modern sense but in that of the occultist. My father should have kept this ever in mind. In the reaction following Olcott's address he sided with the body of the spiritualists and hastily accused H.P.B., and even of imposture. He so wrote to the *Banner of Light*

a sharp attack on the Theosophical Society. So much for running counter to one's religious feelings!

As H.P.B. before the founding of the Society had taken a most active part in the examination of mediums and in the investigation of their phenomena, and having pronounced certain mediums as genuine, and bitterly and publicly attacked those she regarded as frauds, she was classed by the public as an ordinary spiritualist, and quite naturally so, before she had publicly stated her exact position. She was bitterly opposed to the materialism of the day, and looked upon the genuine phenomena of the séance room, even with their limitations, as a stepping-stone to a higher spiritualism and occultism, where the phenomena in every form she declared could be produced by the conscious will-power of the adept who had learned some of the deeper secrets of the laws of both matter and spirit. I therefore feel that the criticism and abuse heaped on her as a renegade, as simply following the line of least resistance, utterly false; these letters, I think, show this. My father was quite too hasty in his revulsion of feeling; he later realized it and was quite willing to admit it. His sorrow and his state of mind at the time may well explain the error he had fallen into. Her future detractors and defamers who claimed that she had jumped from the spirit "John King" and the elementals to the "Master," the Adept of the East, to suit the exigencies of the time and her own profit, were absolutely mistaken and did her a grevious wrong. Even with her absolute faith and confidence in her "Master," she still admitted the

help of the elementals in some of her phenomena. This is shown very clearly in her New York letter alluding to the precipitated portrait of my sister.

My father followed the future history of the Theosophical Society with great interest; he bought H.P.B.'s books as well as a number of works which were the direct outcome of the Society in India.

THE ENEMIES OF H.P.B.

THOSE who love us and hate us, our friends and lovers and our enemies, come and go as the shifting winds, now blowing an icy blast from the North chilling us to the bone and sometimes destroying us, and now a gentle soft wind from the South grateful and comforting. "C'est l'inattendu qui arrive"; unsuspected friends come often from the lowly and the poor, while from the high and haughty we must look for the blows which beat us down. The expression: "From our friends deliver us; from our enemies we can deliver ourselves," may have an involved meaning, but there is an element of truth in it. We can gird on our armour to meet our foe and find strength and inspiration in the struggle, but even our friends, by ill-advised solicitude and interference, may injure us because we are not aware of them and are facing our enemy in another direction.

Life in the jungle is a struggle for food and a place to lay a weary head, as well as for life itself, and in the haunts of men the struggle is even fiercer, for it is the struggle of the spirit as well as of the body. The enemy in the jungle is easily recognized, not so the enemy of man; he comes in many shapes, as trusted friend as well as avowed enemy. "Et tu, Brute" has become a hackneyed phrase—a commentary indeed on human nature. We can but stand and face the foe. Our sins, whatever they may be, the world

will know sooner or later. Sincerity and honest admission are our best weapons; but if accused falsely, we can demand justice and face our accusers with courage and calm. The world demands justice and cries out against injustice; and so every tribunal if it err must err on the side of mercy. The world recognizes the sins and follies of flaming youth and is lenient, for at one time all the world was young. When youth overcomes youth real character is developed and a hero is born. Tennyson's line: "And men may rise on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things," may well be changed to "And men may rise on stepping-stones of their past sins to higher things."

H.P.B. had a stormy youth; it was a flaming youth, of emotional storms and follies, but it was not vicious. It was free and open and unconventional and fearless, but it was not vicious. She became a wanderer and an outcast, but she was not vicious.

Her own first cousin, Count Witte, has not hesitated to give the world a picture of her youth with all its follies, its remarkable vicissitudes and trials and sufferings, but it is not a vicious picture, and withal he cannot help showing his amazement at her powers, and a certain pride in them. But there are years where it is a closed book; but she has not opened it. With all this stormy life, there were still noble qualities, and on account of them, her immediate family have stuck to her, and stuck to her when slandered and reviled. Let this be said to their everlasting credit. Count Witte writes:[1]

[1] *The Memoirs of Count Witte.* 1921.

"One of my aunts, who married a Colonel Hahn, achieved some fame as a writer. Her older daughter was the celebrated theosophist known under the name of Madame Blavatski. The personality and career of my cousin Yelena Petrovna Blavatski deserves to be treated at some length.

"As I was many years her junior, I could not have any recollections of Yelena in her youth. From the stories in our family I gather that when Mrs. Hahn, her mother, died, she and her sister came to live with my grandfather at Tiflis. At an early age, such is the family tradition, Yelena married a certain Blavatski, Vice-Governor of the province of Erivan, and settled in the city of the same name, but soon abandoned her husband and came back to her grandfather. When she appeared in his spacious mansion he immediately decided to send away the troublesome young person at the earliest possible moment to her father, who was an artillery colonel stationed in the vicinity of St. Petersburg. As there were at that time no railways within the territory of the Caucasus, the problem was not without its difficulties. It was solved in this wise. Two women and as many men, including grandfather's trusty steward, were selected from the large staff of domestic serfs, and under this convoy the future theosophic celebrity proceeded in the direction of Poti, enthroned in a capacious four-in-hand. From Poti it was planned to ship the fugitive by sea to some port connected by rail with the interior of Russia. When the company arrived in Poti, several steamers, including an English craft, lay in the harbour. Young Mme. Blavatski, so the story runs, immediately

struck up an acquaintance with the captain of an English vessel. To make a long story short, one fine morning the convoy discovered to their horror that their mistress and charge had vanished into the air. Stowed away in an English ship, she was on her way to Constantinople.

"The subsequent developments of her amazing career appear as follows: At Constantinople she entered a circus as an equestrienne, and it was there that Mitrovich, one of the most celebrated opera bassos of the time, fell in love with her. She gave up the circus and accompanied the singer to one of the European capitals where he was engaged to sing. Shortly afterwards grandfather was the recipient of letters from the singer Mitrovich, who asserted that he was married to Yelena, and styled himself "grandson." The famous basso apparently was not disconcerted by the fact that she had not been properly divorced from her legal husband, the Vice-Governor of Erivan. Several years later a new "grandson" accrued to my grandparents. A certain Englishman from London informed them in a letter bearing an American stamp that he had married Madame Blavatski, who had gone with him on a business trip to the United States. Next she reappears in Europe and becomes the right hand of the celebrated medium of the sixties, Hume [*sic*]. Then her family caught two more glimpses of her dazzling career. They learned from the papers that she gave pianoforte concerts in London and Paris, and afterwards became the manager of the royal choir, maintained by King Milan of Serbia.

"In the meantime some ten years had passed.

fine morning the Kievans discovered a leaflet pasted on the doors and telegraph posts which contained a number of poems very disagreeable for the Governor-General. The author of this poetic outburst was no other person than Mme. Blavatski herself, and as the fact was patent the couple had to clear out.

" She was next heard of from Odessa, where she emerged in the company of her faithful basso. At that time our entire family was settled in that city (my grandparents and father had died at Tiflis), and my brother and I attended the university there. The extraordinary couple must have found themselves in great straits. It was then that my versatile cousin opened in succession an ink factory and retail shop and a store of artificial flowers. In those days she often came to see my mother, and I visited her store several times, so that I had the opportunity of getting better acquainted with her. I was especially impressed by the extraordinary facility with which she acquired skill and knowledge of the most varied description. Her abilities in this respect verged on the uncanny. . . . Consider also that although she never seriously studied any foreign languages, she spoke several of them with perfect ease. I was also struck by her mastery of the technique of verse. She could write pages of smoothly flowing verse without the slightest effort, and she could compose essays in prose on every conceivable subject. Besides, she possessed the gift of hypnotizing both her hearer and herself into believing the wildest inventions of her fantasy. She had, no doubt, a literary talent. The Moscow editor, Katkov, famous in the annals of Russian

journalism, spoke to me in the highest terms of praise about her literary gifts, as evidenced in the tales entitled "From the Jungles of Hindostan" [*sic*] which she contributed to his magazine, *The Russian Messenger* (*Russki Vyestnik*).

"Mme. Blavatski's ventures in the field of commerce proved, of course, dismal failures. It was then that Mitrovich accepted an engagement to sing at the Italian Opera at Cairo, and the couple set out for Egypt. By that time they presented a rather sorry sight, he a toothless lion, perennially at the feet of his mistress, an aged lady, stout and slovenly. Off the African coast their ship was wrecked and all the passengers found themselves in the waves. Mitrovich saved his mistress, but was drowned himself. Mme. Blavatski entered Cairo in a wet skirt and without a penny to her name. How she extricated herself from that situation I do not know, but she was next discovered in England, where she founded a Theosophic Society. To strengthen the foundations of the new cult, she travelled to India, where she studied the occult science of the Hindus. Upon her return from India she became the centre of a large group of devotees of the theosophic doctrine and settled in Paris as the acknowledged head of the theosophists. Shortly afterwards she fell ill and died. The teachings of theosophy, however, are still thriving."

Some of this narrative is from hearsay evidently, and therefore uncertain. Some of it is evidently erroneous; he speaks of the medium "Hume" when he probably means Home, and then he is mixed on her theosophical movements. Much of it, however, must be true. The story is an amazing

one when we consider her talents and genius, and her heroic efforts to carry out her mission in the last twenty years of her life as she conceived it. So far as I know she has freely admitted this story of her youth, and that's an end of it. It has no bearing on her subsequent life, does in no way interfere with our estimate of her talents and genius, or the character of the work she accomplished under so much storm and stress. She had her friends and admirers who adored her, and she had her enemies who stopped at nothing to slander her and revile her during her life and after her death when she could not protect herself. Hers is not an isolated case. Mediocrity the world passes by without comment one way or the other, but talent and intellect and genius must face the world's verdict both for its sins and its accomplishments. Edgar Allen Poe was refused a niche in the Hall of Fame because he was an alcoholic; perhaps some of the women of the W.C.T.U. objected—Lord Byron was refused Westminster Abbey because he led a wild life and defied the world's opinion. Shelley was kicked out of Oxford, but to-day there is his noble monument in his college, and the visitor to the Bodleian can see his precious relics.

When H.P.B. founded the Theosophical Society in New York the pack was after her, but it was a harmless one that only barked. In India another pack was on her track that was not so harmless, for it had the hate which comes with religious bigotry, and which is eager to destroy. But more anxious days are ahead of her; the proud and the haughty are after her, eager to destroy her, whether she preaches the powers of

the liberated and illuminated spirit of man or the immortality of his soul. Even her death does not stop them, for their paid hirelings would besmirch her name. And one who had no right to fame whatsoever, was still satisfied to proclaim himself "the exposer of Madame Blavatsky and other humbugs." When we view to-day, after so many years and after all the actors in the affair are dead, the methods of the English Society for Psychical Research in their attack on H.P.B., we are filled with a moral nausea.

Among my father's papers I have come across a letter of Dr. Richard Hodgson in which he quotes an expression of my father's directed against some of the prominent members of the S.P.R. In declining to become a member he speaks of them as not responsive as they should be "from lack of individual evolution"; and it seems to me that this cannot be better expressed; they are eager for research from curiosity alone, and not from any real sympathy whatsoever with the subject itself,—and their mistakes, grievous and many, can be explained on this basis.

The S.P.R. can well boast of many distinguished members. Certain names stand forth as representative of the best minds in England, in Europe, and in America. Sir William Crookes, Lord Rayleigh, Professor F. W. H. Myers, Sir William Barrett, Professor Charles Richet, Professor William James, come to my mind among many others who might be mentioned. In their time they had been Presidents of the Society, and their presidential addresses have been eloquent appeals for psychical research work. But these great men were attachés rather than products of the

Society; they were products of themselves, great scientists who saw the necessity of bringing psychical research under the ægis of pure science, so far as that could be accomplished. Some of them were convinced that a communication had been established between a spiritual world and this world. One of the first in this regard was Sir William Crookes, whose great achievements in pure science did not interfere with his courage and candour and open-mindedness in proclaiming the genuineness of certain psychical phenomena which he thought opened up a communication between the two worlds. Professor Charles Richet, another great scientist, after thirty years of psychical research, proclaimed the phenomena genuine, but could not accept the spiritualistic theory. Sir Oliver Lodge, and a lovely personality, has not only enriched science, but has enriched the religious thought of the day and has helped to spiritualize the attitude of the English Church: a glorious name, a glorious record, and a glorious man.

With the name of F. W. H. Myers there comes before us the greatest figure of all in this galaxy of great men. His was the greatest struggle to convince himself of his immortality, and that he finally achieved this conviction he has expressed in poetry and prose which will endure as long as the greatest in English literature. It is said that his extemporaneous addresses before the Society were inspired appeals for the study of genius and of all the phenomena that bore on the immortality of the soul. He alone synthetized the records of the Society into a living and vibrant whole. His great work was a new and real

psychology which gave a new significance to the physiological psychology of all the schools. Few, however, were prepared to see the road he indicated, but were still content to wander off into side paths which led but to impenetrable bogs. Take F. W. H. Myers out of the Society and you seem to have nothing left but a clerical force, busy with formulating and tabulating psychical occurrences known since the beginning of history, and putting them in shape for the Western mind to visé and to generally discredit. They had a great curiosity for ghosts which they did not believe in. In many of their interminable arguments and analyses, especially with the cross correspondences and automatic writing, you had to admire the tenacity with which they pursued the subject and the equal tenacity with which they held on to the future.

Usually anything like a physical phenomenon, so called, was like a red flag to a bull. After Eusapia Paladino was mussed up by the Harvard University committee, which seemed more like a committee of plumbers who had more faith in a sewer connection than in their own immortality, one would have supposed that they would have been more circumspect and rational before they, too, mussed her up; but no, they, too, turned her down, and she had to seek justification and vindication in a well-equipped physical laboratory under the control of Italian scientists.

Professor Myers left a sealed envelope to try to prove his continued life after death, a precious document indeed, to be treated with every care and caution, but which was recklessly and needlessly torn open on the evidence of poor medium-

ship or no psychical evidence at all. They went on the basis that anything paid for was wrong, and only what they could get for nothing was worth anything. "It was only Heaven that was given away."

With the Theosophical movement and the publication of Sinnett's *Occult World* the Society was induced to take notice. The amazing character of the phenomena was a challenge for their critical investigation. While shy of paid mediums they were not shy of a paid agent, so Dr. Richard Hodgson, a young man with a university training, but with no experience in psychical research, was sent out to India to investigate. Though Mr. Sinnett and Col. Olcott had had a long and intimate acquaintance with H.P.B., and were of superior intelligence—as evidenced by their writings—this was of no consequence to this presumptuous and bumptious young man. He considered himself an expert on mal-observation, and proceeded to turn himself into judge, jury, and prosecuting attorney, and declare Mme. Blavatsky the greatest charlatan and humbug of her age. He was a veritable bull in a china shop.

Had this case been tried in court every witness on which Hodgson based his reports could have been discredited by opposing counsel, either on the ground of bad character or incompetency. At that time the so-called caligraphist was a poor apology indeed for an expert on hand-writing. This one in particular made himself ridiculous in "The Pigott Forgery," and later was flatly contradicted in his testimony on the Coulomb letters by a German caligraphist who at least had a better record behind him. To show the uncer-

tainty of the science of caligraphy at that time, the great Bertillon, famous for his detective skill, and noted for his caution in expressing an opinion on all cases of any doubt, was swept along on the tidal wave of indignation over the Dreyfus case, and testified that Dreyfus wrote the famous Bordereau which Esterhazy had forged. He never got over the shame and humiliation of his mistake, and no man of fine instincts could fail to do the same. In after years, when time and more experience might have brought doubt to Hodgson and the S.P.R., they never let that doubt trouble their conscience or interfere with their sleep; their pachyderm hides were quite too thick for that.

To-day the science is on a much firmer basis, and the science of criminology as developed by the Paris Sûrété is unexcelled in the world, and caligraphy has been worked out to the finest details of detection. Just think that neither H.P.B. nor her defenders were ever allowed to see the so-called incriminating letters; just think that her accusers never even saw her or faced her. She herself was the greatest psychical phenomenon of her age, more wonderful than any of her own phenomena, and remember, too, that all the phenomena which occurred in her presence or even when not present had their counterpart in the well-attested phenomena of the séance room. What she with the greatest emphasis always contended was, that her phenomena were the direct result of her own will, while those of the séance room were involuntary and usually while the medium was unconscious. And with equal emphasis she contended that certain of the

phenomena were aided by elementals or undeveloped spirits of the lower spheres. Of this, of course, we know absolutely nothing definite. We can at least rest for the present content if we can assure ourselves that ordinary fraud and trickery are ruled out. The position of Charles Richet in this matter is most commendable, and his caution should be an example to all researchers.

Classical scholarship is encouraged by the real scholars; it is only the pedants and the endless gerund-grinders who are the enemies of true scholarship. And so in psychical research, the grubbers into the phenomena are the enemies of this great movement.

Better regard a psychical occurrence as you regard any other occurrence,—perhaps it is more real than stumping your toe in the street—and don't at once think you have an hallucination or, perhaps, the delirium tremens; take it first as a fact, analyse it if you please, but remember that with an endless argument it will vanish into thin air. The endless arguments and disputations of the S.P.R. are not only dreary reading but they drop you with a thud in No-Man's-Land. The bulldog grip of incredulity makes you believe that you are possessed of great penetrative intelligence when, as a matter of fact, you are asleep on your job. Many psychical researchers are very proud of their sleepy state and their dormant powers. Remember, however, that this is very different from the "luminous sleep" so well described by Mr. Ârunachalam, of Christ's College, Cambridge. And right here let me not fail to mention his distinguished brother, the

Hon. P. Râmanâthan, whose fine scholarship and charming books represent the best of biblical exegesis and Indian thought, and which are worth a thousand societies of psychical research, —provided we leave out F. W. H. Myers,—whose grubbers, toiling in the field to pick out the rocks and stubble, are blind to the flowers of the Elysian fields in full bloom about them.

Even a long argument and disputation before the Court defeat their own purpose, but in philosophy, and even in psychical matters, they cut their own throats. You see less of this in the European societies: the French, German, and Italian workers have in recent years done better work; their publications are more definite and more conclusive. In whatever exposures they have made of fraudulent phenomena they have shown not only a rare skill in their detection, but they have shown discrimination and justice, *with the closest study of the offender himself.* In many instances, and especially in the case of Eusapia Paladino, they have been able to show that the hysterical element has been a large factor in the case and that a simple abulia has been to blame. The hysteric with her obstinacy exclaims with even a certain emphasis "I will not"; she should have said "I cannot will." Janet has especially developed this feature among hystericals, and has thrown a flood of light on all the phenomena of this psychical state. None of these European societies have shown a scandal equal to the attack of the English Society on H.P.B., and it may well be called a scandal for its lack of justice, of discrimination, and a full appreciation of all the psychical elements in the case.

when her own powerful pen had dropped for ever from her hand.

Let me deal first with the Prefatory Note by Sidgwick. It is short enough, but short as it is, it contains more venom than any of the attacks upon this dead woman. A scene of the Inquisition rises before us. He is the Grand Inquisitor, before whom stands the trembling but defiant victim. The members of the Inquisition are awaiting the verdict, a verdict which they already know, and he has but to give it voice: "The evidence is sufficient; the woman is a witch; see that she is burned."

Professor Sidgwick undoubtedly knows his Latin and Greek, and you have but to ask him about an obscure text and he gives you the information; but he, like Hodgson, lacks "individual evolution." His capacity ends abruptly with his obscure texts. He is probably the mild-mannered professor in his social relations, but he is the brazen inquisitor when he comes to judge a psychic. He has no business with psychical research, no sympathy with the subject, and hardly even a grubber in that field of mystery; and his ignorance has made him vicious. There were other men in the society like him, and certain members could not breathe the same air with them and got out; I recall the case of Stainton Moses especially, who was much in sympathy with the theosophical movement as well as friendly with Olcott and H.P.B.

The translator's preface by Walter Leaf is a longer production, and much more cautious in its abuse; and he may well be. He too has the S.P.R. back of him, and he is evidently, too, one

of its hirelings. He has the difficult task of explaining away the complete *volte-face* of Solovyoff, and the task is too difficult for him. He does not hesitate to call H.P.B. a liar, and a discriminating reader will have no difficulty in calling him one; it helps to even up the scales. He is more than half-conscious of the difficult task before him, and that he is skimming thin ice, but with all his caution he gives himself away, and he certainly gives Solovyoff away. Listen to this: "It is clear that these letters and Mr. Solovyoff's own narrative present two very different pictures of his mental attitude during 1884 and 1885. The narrative represents M. Solovyoff, with the exception of short phases when he was carried away in spite of himself, as a cool-headed critic engaged in a scientific inquiry. The letters show that he was more than coquetting with belief during the greater part of this period. Readers have the materials for a judgment before them, and must decide for themselves as to the bearing of this on Mr. Solovyoff's credibility. It will be only reasonable that in so doing they should remember the inevitable tendency which a man has after the event, especially at an interval of several years, to consider himself wiser from the first than he was in reality; and they will also remember that Mr. Solovyoff is amply justified by his letters in stating that from the first he never professed an absolute belief in Madame Blavatsky and her doctrines; and that she was throughout well aware of the fact. Nor should it be forgotten that the letters are not entire; they are selected by a bitter personal enemy with the purpose of damaging their writer, who is entitled to the benefit of

his assertion that, if quoted in full, they would have strengthened his case."

As the old Quaker would say : " First thee asks me a question and then thee tells me a lie."

When Solovyoff lies he calls his lie an inconsistency. Listen again to this : " The letter which raises the most serious question is, in my mind, the letter marked (B) on page 2888. This does, so far as I can judge, imply a real inconsistency with Mr. Solovyoff's narrative ; it implies that he has not correctly represented the mental attitude in which he found himself after the Würzburg conversations. I confess that I am not satisfied with his own explanation that the whole letter is merely bantering. In fact, under the circumstances, the ' bantering tone ' itself requires explanation."

We shall have to give Mr. Walter Leaf credit for this admission, especially as the letter and incident referred to mean swallowing a whole caravan of camels. We find the incident in Sinnett's life of Mme. Blavatsky, and the remarkable feature about it is that it is good evidence of Mme. B.'s clairvoyant powers as well as of the astonishing phenomenon of precipitation. The evidence is as good as any put forth by the S.P.R., and I quote it *in extenso*—as a vindication of H.P.B. and as giving the direct lie to Solovyoff. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*, and now how much can we believe of this witness of the S.P.R. ?

" The undersigned attest the following phenomenon :

" On the morning of the 11th of June, instant, we were present in the reception room of the

Theosophical Society at Paris, 46 Rue Notre Dame des Champs, when a letter was delivered by the postman. The door of the room in which we were sitting was open, so that we could see into the hall; and the servant who answered the bell was seen to take the letter from the postman and bring it to us at once, placing it in the hands of Mme. Jélihowsky, who threw it before her on the table round which we were sitting. The letter was addressed to a lady, a relative of Mme. Blavatsky's, who was then visiting her, and came from another relative in Russia. There were present in the room, Mme. de Morsier, secretary-general of the Société Theosophique d'Orient et d'Occident; M. Soloviof, son of the distinguished Russian historian, and attaché of the Imperial Court, himself well known as a writer; Colonel Olcott, Mr. W. Q. Judge, Mohini-Babu, and several other persons. Mme. Blavatsky was also sitting at the table. Mme. Jélihowsky, upon her sister (Mme. Blavatsky) remarking that she would like to know what was in the letter, asked her, on the spur of the moment, to read its contents before the seal was broken, since she professed to be able to do so.

"Thus challenged, Mme. Blavatsky at once took up the closed letter, held it against her forehead, and read aloud what she professed to be its contents. These alleged contents she further wrote down on a blank page of an old letter that lay on the table. Then she said she would give those present, since her sister still laughed at and challenged her power, even a clearer proof that she was able to exercise her psychic power *within* the closed envelope. Remarking that her own

name occurred in the course of the letter, she said she would underline this through the envelope in red crayon. In order to effect this she wrote her name on the old letter (on which the alleged copy of the contents of the sealed letter had been written) together with an interlaced double triangle, or 'Solomon's Seal,' below the signature, which she had copied as well as the body of the letter. This was done in spite of her sister remarking that her correspondent hardly ever signed her name in full when writing to relatives, and that in this at least Mme. Blavatsky would find herself mistaken. 'Nevertheless,' she replied, 'I will cause these two red marks to appear in the corresponding places within the letter.'

"She next laid the closed letter beside the open one upon the table, and placed her hand upon both, so as to make (as she said) a bridge, along which a current of psychic force might pass. Then, *with her features settled into an expression of intense mental concentration*, she kept her hand quietly thus for a few moments, after which, tossing the closed letter across the table to her sister, she said: 'Tiens, c'est fait. The experiment is successfully finished.' Here, it may be well to add, to show that the letter could not have been tampered with in transit—unless by a Government official—that the stamps were fixed on the flap of the envelope, where a seal is usually placed.

"Upon the envelope being opened by the lady to whom it was addressed, it was found *that Mme. Blavatsky had actually written out its contents; that her name was there; that she had really underlined it in red, as she had promised; and that the*

double triangle was reproduced below the writer's signature, which was in full, as Mme. Blavatsky had described it.

" Another fact of exceptional interest we noted. *A slight defect in formation of one of the two interlaced triangles, as drawn by Mme. Blavatsky, had been faithfully reproduced within the closed letter.*

" This experiment was doubly valuable, as at once an illustration of clairvoyant perception, by which Mme. Blavatsky correctly read the contents of the sealed letter, and of the phenomenon of precipitation, or the deposit of pigmentary matter in the form of figures and lines previously drawn by the operator in the presence of observers.

(signed)

" Vera Jélihowsky.
Vsevolod Solovyoff.
Nadejda A. Fadéef.
Emilie de Morsier.
William Q. Judge.
H. S. Olcott.

" Paris, June 21st, 1884."

In the St. Petersburg *Rebus* (a periodical of psychological sciences) of July 1st, 1884, No. 26, the same account appeared over the signature of V. Solovyoff, an eye-witness of the above fact, under the title of

" Interesting Phenomenon."[1]

[1] Since then the author, between whom and Madame Blavatsky there have been personal differences, tried to throw a doubt over the genuineness of this phenomenon, saying that it may have been due to psychological glamour thrown over the witnesses. On that hypothesis the bare fact of Mme. Blavatsky possessing the power of collectively mesmerising a group of people in full daylight, so that they thought they saw a series of occurrences that they did not see, is, to say the least, sufficiently astonishing.

A Letter to the Editor.

Several persons, among that number myself, met casually H. P. Blavatsky (the founder of the Theosophical Society, then on a visit to Paris) about 10 a.m. in the forenoon. A postman entered and brought, among others, a letter for a relative of Mme. B., then on a visit to the latter, but owing to the early morning hour still absent in her bedroom. *From the hands of the postman the letter passed on, in the presence of all present, upon the table in the parlour, where we were all gathered.* Glancing at the postmark and the address of that particular letter, both Mme. Blavatsky and her sister, Mme. Jélihowsky, remarked that it came from a mutual relative then at Odessa. The envelope was not only completely closed on all its flaps, but the post stamp itself was glued on the place where the seal is habitually placed—as I got convinced by carefully examining it myself. H. P. Blavatsky, who was on that morning, as I had remarked, in very high spirits, undertook, unexpectedly for all of us, with the exception of her sister, who was the first to propose it and to defy Mme. B. to do it, to read the letter in this closed envelope. After this she placed it on her forehead, and with visible efforts began to read it out, writing down the pronounced sentences on a sheet of paper. When she finished, her sister expressed her doubts as to the success of the experiment, remarking that several of the expressions read out and written down by Mme. B. could hardly be found in a letter from the person who had written it. Then H.P.B. became visibly irritated by this, and declared that in such case she

would still do more. Taking the sheet of paper again she traced upon it with red pencil, at the foot of the sentences supposed to be contained in the closed letter, noted down by her *a sign*, then she underlined a word, after which, with a visible effort on her face, she said: "This sign that I make must pass into the envelope at the end of the letter, and this word in it will be found underlined, as I have done it here!" . . .

When the letter was opened, its contents were found identical with what Mme. Blavatsky had written down, and, at the end of it we all saw the sign in red pencil correctly repeated, and the word underlined by her on her paper, was not only there, but equally underlined in red pencil.

After that an exact description of the phenomenon was drawn up, and all of us, the witnesses present, signed our names under it.

The circumstances under which the phenomenon occurred in its smallest details, carefully checked by myself, do not leave in me the smallest doubt as to its *genuineness* and reality. Deception and fraud in this particular case *are entirely out of the question*.

Vs. Solovyoff.

Paris, 10 (22) June, 1884.

Sinnett's note on this case, in which he states that Solovyoff tried later to wriggle out of his emphatic attestation of the genuineness of the phenomenon by bringing in the hypothesis of a psychological glamour, is interesting; it's an old trick and much employed by the S.P.R. as well as by this slippery fellow throughout his book.

Hodgson gets out of it on the theory of mal-observation, individual or collective; you can argue yourself out of anything if you try long enough. But enough of this anti-psychical research stuff. We have another thing to consider, namely, the famous "confession," which would be a great mystery if we did not possess from many other sources an intimate knowledge of the personality of this amazing woman; and this knowledge we have from her own family, and from those who were long intimately associated with her, and very much indeed from her own candid accounts of herself.

Olcott, who was devoted to her throughout their long and intimate association, her humble slave, in fact, did not hesitate to tell of his difficulties with her, of her violent fits of rage, of her casting to the winds a conciliatory attitude towards those who were suspicious of her, or inimical to the Society.

Sinnett, who was most sympathetic, also describes the difficulties of her volcanic emotions. My father wrote me of the impossibility of entertaining her or trying to entertain her, and her lack of the ordinary graces and amenities of life. She was "the great Russian Bear," yet after she left he wrote "we enjoyed her visit." Such an amazing personality could not fail to be interesting. We are therefore well prepared to study and analyse this "confession" which the S.P.R. eagerly grasped to try and justify their *ex parte* judgment of the woman. To the admirers of H.P.B. this document did not detract from their admiration for her or their devotion to her, but they certainly lamented the fact that she

had made this confession to this insufferable cad.

She begins this "Confession" *in medias res:*

"I have made up my mind (doubly underlined). Has the following picture ever presented itself to your literary imagination? There is living in the forest a wild boar—an ugly creature, but doing no harm to anyone so long as they leave him in peace in his forest, with his wild beast friends who love him. This boar never hurt anyone in his life, but only grunted to himself as he ate the roots which were his own in the forest which sheltered him. There is let loose upon him, without rhyme or reason, a pack of ferocious hounds; men chase him from the wood, threaten to burn his native forest, and to leave him a wanderer, homeless, for anyone to kill. He flies for awhile, though he is no coward by nature, before these hounds; he tries to escape *for the sake of the forest,* lest they burn it down. But, lo! one after another the wild beasts who were once his friends join the hounds; they begin to chase him, yelping and trying to bite and catch him, to make an end of him. Worn out, the boar sees that his forest is already set on fire and that he cannot save it nor himself. What is there for the boar to do? Why, this; he stops, he turn his face to the furious pack of hounds and beasts, and shows himself wholly (twice underlined) as he is, from top to bottom, and then falls upon his enemies in his turn, and kills as many of them as his strength serves till he falls dead—and then he is *really* powerless."

I shall analyse this confession in separate parts.

In viewing this first part we must remember that it was written in Russian, and then translated into French, and then again into English. Whether it has been garbled or mis-translated to meet the wishes of those who would use it as a weapon against her may well be questioned. If I remember correctly, H.P.B.'s family were refused any examination of the original Russian documents. The excuse was that the translation was attested by Jules Baissac, the well known scholar and linguist, who held the title of "sworn translator to the Paris Court of Appeal." We may well be satisfied with the testimony of this man, but we may well doubt whether the document placed in his hand was the one as written by H.P.B. I would not trust Solovyoff under any circumstances. Taken as given us it is a most remarkable human document, and stands by itself in modern literature. One thing is certain, it is real literature, finer than anyone of her assailants could have written; even F. W. H. Myers, the one genius among them, could not have written it. His gentle and beautiful spirit could never have reached the pitch of such an outburst of emotional storm and rage. His fire was not of this Promethean intensity.

The first part is real genius, and shows the literary artist at her best. There is one great touch in it that makes it incomparable. The boar loves his forest and would only escape to save it from the firebrand; but when his beloved haunts are already destroyed he faces the pack of hounds and beasts, kills as many as he can, and dies in the struggle.

I know nothing like it in literature. Benvenuto

Cellini, in his *Autobiography*, is mild in comparison. It is a glorious outburst against injustice with the hunted animal at bay. It is no "confession," but an heroic attack on her enemies. There is no admission of guilt of any kind; she has harmed no one; if left alone she is harmless; but if attacked she will kill and die herself in the struggle, for death means nothing to her. If her enemies see the charlatan and the impostor in this they have neither insight nor intuition. .

Two bits in our cherished literature come to our mind. One is the old Lear with his faithful fool cast out into the storm. His outburst against the elements is grandiose; there is nothing finer in Shakespeare:

> "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
> You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
> Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That make ungrateful man!"

And the other is Virgil's description of the hunted boar at bay in the Tenth Book of the Æneid. One might think that H.P.B. was acquainted with it, but I do not think so. It would seem that in writing it, the writing was automatic, and that this simile of the boar crept in as so much often creeps in from foreign or obscure sources. The suspicion has this basis at least, that much of her writing was automatic, and that many quotations were unknown to her except clairvoyantly.

The comparison is rather striking. Conington's

translation I do not especially care for, and even less for Dryden's. I have always felt that the closer the literal translation, and even the more closely one follows the order of the words, the nearer one gets to the vigour of the original and to the mental state of the writer. A free translation, no matter how sonorous, will often miss the spirit of the original. I give a translation as closely literal as I can make it :

" And like that boar driven from the high hills by the biting hounds, whom pine-clad Vesulus and the Laurentine fens had sheltered many a year, and whom the reedy wood had fed, when, midst the toils (nets) he came, stopped short and fiercely roared and bristled up his shoulders ; none so bold to test his wrath or nearer come ; but at a safe distance they ply him with darts and shouts. He truly fearless stands at bay, ready to face on every side, gnashing his teeth, and from his hide he shakes the spears. And so of those who at Mezentius justly are enraged, no one dares to meet him with a naked sword ; they can but gall him at a distance with missiles and loud shouts."

H.P.B.'s simile seems more striking in that, in comparing *herself* with the boar, the comparison has a much more human touch, and the boar's love of his forest, and his eagerness to escape to save the forest, thoughtless of himself and without any fear of his enemies, is a bit of genius better than any mere literary skill.

Now follows the whole of this " confession."

" *Believe me, I have fallen because I have made up my mind to fall,* or else to bring about a

reaction by telling all God's truth about myself, *but without mercy on my enemies*. On this I am firmly resolved, and from this day I shall begin to prepare myself in order to be ready. I will fly no more. Together with this letter, or a few hours later, I shall be in Paris, and then on to London. A Frenchman is ready, and a well known journalist too, delighted to set about the work and to write at my dictation something short, but strong, and what is most important—a true history of my life. *I shall not even attempt to defend*, to justify myself. In this book I shall simply say: In 1848, I, hating my husband, N. V. Blavatsky (it may have been wrong, but still, such was the nature *God* gave me), left him, abandoned him—*a virgin* (I shall produce documents and letters proving this, although he himself is not such a swine as to deny it). I loved one man deeply, but still more I loved occult science, believing in magic, wizards, etc. I wandered with him here and there, in Asia, in America, and in Europe. I met with So-and-So. (You may call him a *wizard*, what does it matter to him?) In 1858 I was in London; there came out some story about a child, not mine (there will follow medical evidence, from the faculty of Paris, and it is for this I am going to Paris). One thing and another was said of me: that I was depraved, possessed with a devil, etc. I shall tell everything as I think fit, everything I did, for the twenty years and more that I laughed at the *qu'en dira-t-on*, and covered up all traces of what I was *really* occupied in, i.e. the *sciences occultes*, for the sake of my family and relations who would at that time have cursed me. I will tell how from

my eighteenth year I tried to get people to talk about me, and say that this man or that was my lover, and *hundreds* of them. I will tell, too, a great deal of which no one ever dreamed, and *I will prove it.* Then I will inform the world how suddenly my eyes were opened to all the horror of my *moral suicide ;* how I was sent to America to try my psychological capabilities. How I collected a society there, and began to expiate my faults, and attempted to make men better and to sacrifice myself for their regeneration. *I will name all* the theosophists who were brought into the right way, drunkards and rakes, who became almost saints, especially in India, and those who enlisted as theosophists, and continued their former life, as though they were doing the work (and there are many of them) and *yet were the first* to join the pack of hounds that were hunting me down and to bite me. I will describe many Russians great and small—Madame S—— among them, *her* slander, and how it turned out to be a lie and a calumny. I shall not spare myself, I swear I will not spare ; *I myself will set fire* to the four quarters of my native wood, the society to wit, and I will perish, but I will perish *with a huge following.* God grant I shall die, shall perish at once on publication ; but if not, if the master would not allow it, how should I fear anything ? Am I a criminal before the law ? Have I killed anyone, destroyed, defamed ? I am an American foreigner, and I must not go back to Russia. From Blavatsky, if he is alive, what have I to fear ? It is thirty-eight years since I parted from him ; after that I passed three days and a half with him in Tiflis, in 1863, and then we parted

again. Or M——? I do not care a straw about that egoist and hypocrite! He betrayed me, destroyed me by telling lies to the medium Home, who has been disgracing me for ten years already, so much the worse for him. You understand, it is for the sake of the Society I have valued my reputation these ten years. I *trembled* lest rumours, founded *on my own efforts* (a splendid case for the psychologists, for Richet and Co.) and magnified a hundred times, might throw discredit on the Society while blackening me. I was ready to go on my knees to those who helped me to cast a veil over my past; to give my life and all my powers to those who helped me. But now? Will you, or Home the medium, or M——, or anyone in the world, frighten me with threats when I have myself resolved on a full confession? Absurd! I tortured and killed myself with fear and terror that I should damage the Society—kill it. But now I torture myself no more. I have thought it all out, coolly and sanely. I have risked all on a single card—*all!* (twice underlined). I will snatch the weapon from the enemies' hand and write a book which will make a noise through all Europe and Asia, and bring in immense sums of money, to support my orphan niece, an innocent child, my brother's orphan. Even if all the filth, all the scandal and lies against me had been the holy truth, still I should have been no worse than hundreds of princesses, countesses, Court ladies and royalties, than Queen Isabella herself, who have given themselves, even *sold* themselves, to the entire male sex, from nobles *to coachmen and waiters inclusive;* what can they say of me worse than that? *And all this I myself will say and sign.*

"No! The devils will save me in this last great hour. You did not calculate on the cool determination of *despair*, which *was* and has *passed over*. To you I have never done any harm whatever, I never dreamt of it. If I am lost I am lost with everyone. I will even take to lies, to the greatest of lies, which for that reason is the most likely of all to be believed. I will say and publish it in the *Times* and in all the papers, that the 'master' and 'Mahatma K.H.' are only the products of my own imagination; that I *invented* them, that the phenomena were all more or less *spiritualistic* apparitions, and I shall have twenty million *spiritists* in a body at my back. I will say that in certain instances I *fooled* people; I will expose dozens of *fools* (underlined twice) *des hallucinés;* I will say that I was making trial for my own satisfaction, for the sake of experiment. And to this I have been brought by *you* (underlined twice). You have been the last straw which has broken the camel's back under its intolerably heavy burden.

"Now you are at liberty to conceal nothing. Repeat to all Paris what you have ever heard or know about me. I have already written a letter to Sinnett *forbidding him* to publish my *memoirs* at his own discretion. I myself will publish them with all the truth. So there will be the '*truth* (underlined twice) about H. P. Blavatsky,' in which psychology and *her own* and others' immorality and Rome and politics and all *her own* and others' filth once more will be set out to God's world. I shall conceal nothing. It will be a Saturnalia of the moral depravity of mankind, this *confession* of mine, a worthy epilogue of my

stormy life. And it will be a treasure for science as well as for scandal: and it is all me, *me* (underlined twice), which will break many, and will resound through all the world. Let the psychist gentlemen, and whosoever will, set on foot a new inquiry. Mohini and all the rest, even *India*, are dead for me. I thirst for one thing only, that the world may know all the reality, all the *truth*, and learn the lesson. And then *death*, kindest of all.

"H. BLAVATSKY.

"You may print this letter if you will, even in Russia. It is all the same now."

This "confession" had to be quoted in its entirety; it is practically the whole book; everything centres about it; the rest are but the scoriæ around the central volcano. These scoriæ are in most instances insinuations, prevarications, overt sneers at the Theosophical Society and its workers, covert attempts to cover up his own tracks, veiled apologies, and the veiled fear that the reader may detect his weaknesses, and his lies which Walter Leaf calls his inconsistencies. Professor Sidgwick's sneer at the Theosophical Society, and his surprise that it had already lived twenty years, and his cocksureness that nothing further would be written about it, or that it was dead as a hammer, simply show that even the learned may err.

As a movement for the betterment of humanity the Theosophical Society is more worthy of consideration than the English Society for Psychical Research. As I have said before, take out F. W. H. Myers' works and writings and there

is not much left. Certainly the S.P.R. has made no discoveries; they have not even shown us better methods of research. The principal works which have come from psychical research have come from outside. The Theosophical Society with all its mistakes and blunders was still a wonderful movement; and even if we can only see in it a stepping-stone to the Vedanta Society, a purely Indian movement, it deserves the thanks of all students of Eastern philosophy and religions; it may not have gained much headway, but it was at least an attempt towards a spiritual renaissance for the Western world, and God knows it needed it.

Sometimes we get a treasure even from an insufferable cad. A diamond has been found in a dung-hill, and I can refer the reader to Æsop for an account of the incident.

Rage and emotional storm may be an inspiration, and the farthest removed from the madness of the mad-house. In this case it seems like a flash of lightning revealing a whole lifetime. The pent up humiliation and sorrow of years have been given voice and have cleared the atmosphere. After this storm came a calm, or a calm comparatively speaking, and the rest of the weary life was passed in quiet with the interminable writing, and the care and solicitude of friends watched and waited until the tired spirit had passed on.

"The devils will save me even in this last great hour." The thought is staggering, but you see back of it a superb faith in herself, for even if the angels fail her the devils will come to her help; she is worth saving even by them. The woman

has nothing to confess but the follies of her flaming youth; but even in this "confession" her love of the *sciences occultes* was paramount, and she hints that even her follies were at times a blind to ward off the imprecations of her family, who hated more her love of magic than the follies of her youth. Plain as Count Witte is in his account of her, she is never the charlatan or the impostor; wild and tempestuous as her life was, she was never the show-woman. If poverty-stricken she turns to small shop-keeping to give her food and shelter. According to Olcott, when penniless on her arrival in America she made neckties for a living. She crossed in the steerage to share her first-class ticket with an unfortunate. In her letters to my father she writes of giving almost her last penny to further the spiritualistic cause, to encourage the cult for phenomena, for they were still a part of the occult, and a part of the scheme of her mission. Her traducers who hounded her for turning from spiritualism to the Theosophical Society for material and selfish motives alone have sadly erred and basely slandered her. She had nothing to gain whatsoever in a worldly way from going from one to the other. In her earliest letters she stated emphatically that her spiritualism long antedated and differed from the Rochester knockings and the phenomena of the séance room, and yet she saw fit to encourage the modern phase of this occultism as a stepping-stone to higher conceptions of the spiritual world. No one can say that she was not mistaken in much she put forth and blundered at times in the manner of it, but this cannot be counted against her character. Even

her excessive views have many followers and still have, and the Church is her greatest ally to-day, for it has been opposed generally to the most innocent psychical research. In this "confession" she never cast a doubt about her "helpers," whoever they were. She threatens to lie about them, while pulling down the temple on her enemies as well as on herself. If she lies it is to be more believed, as lies are often more acceptable to the world than the truth. If she lies at all it is from pain and rage. "*Etiam innocentes cogit mentiri dolor.*" Through it all her love for the Society was first, and transcended every other consideration. If she was silent about her past it was only for the sake of her beloved Society, for if any human being ever worked more faithfully for a cause than she did I am not aware of it. It was the one thought day and night, and the thought was a noble one, and a charlatan and an impostor has no noble thoughts. The S.P.R. had to justify its judgment of her, and its tool was eager for the job. There may be rage in this confession, but there is more pain and sorrow, and it is not without dignity and a superb hauteur. It is not her enemies who enrage her so much as it is the supposed friends who turn traitors. Think of this Solovyoff who after her death published this book and while near relatives still lived with whom he had been on intimate terms, and in whose home he had married his wife! But he had the S.P.R. at his back, and he had good copy for the Russian periodicals, and probably good money for its publication. And what was his excuse to offset this vulgar retaliation? His sensitive soul was hurt by Madame's failure

to confide in him; and perhaps to show him some of her "tricks." No lover of truth, he. I am quite sure that unless he had had the S.P.R. back of him this book would not have been written. If the S.P.R. thought they were furthering psychical research by this attack they were greatly mistaken; not one of the phenomena they called false but had been verified repeatedly through many outside sources; not one. Their methods were as brutal as any in the history of modern spiritualism, which has gained headway in spite of the lies and the ridicule and the slander directed against it; the methods of Scotland Yard are not applicable to psychical research.

I never was a member myself of the Theosophical Society, but I saw its value in many ways. I was interested in the books which originated from it, and I have no doubt that it opened the way later to a more sympathetic reception of the Eastern religions and philosophy in the Western world, especially as represented by the Vedanta Society, from which I got great pleasure and benefit.

It cleared my mind of many doubts. It gave me a new interest in the Four Gospels. It gave a new significance to the life and teachings of Christ. It helped me to drop the physiological psychology of the schools. The Rajayoga as explained by Vivakananda opened my eyes to the possibilities of the human spirit when properly trained.

The S.P.R. gave no life to psychical research because they had no imagination; they had suppressed the little they had for fear of "seeing things." In the words of James Whitcomb Riley's

"Little Orphant Annie," "The Gobble-uns will git you ef you don't watch out." Dry as dust and as stiff as a poker they gave you nothing but a mummy with interminable wrappings.

The Theosophical Society at least had imagination, the quality of sympathy with all phases of Eastern thought and psychology, strange and bizarre and almost unbelievable as much of it might seem. Hamlet says "all things are possible," and that's what the Eastern ascetics say, and if you believe that there is some chance for you to get ahead.

Even admitting that Count Witte's story is true, I have quoted it because I think it valuable, and probably largely true; Madame Blavatsky was a great figure in the world of her time; she did a great work and gave thousands something to think about. The S.P.R. are still tabulating and checking up, and don't believe the philosophy of Hamlet. And the only thing they are willing to admit is what they don't believe. Cicero himself would rather err with Plato than believe true things with such fellows (*cum istis*); and I am on Cicero's side.

As a final shot the S.P.R. in Appendix C hired William Emmett Coleman to count all the quotations and the passages without quotation marks in H.P.B.'s writings, and all the books quoted from, as an evidence of her imposture. This argument is wholly based on the assumption that she wrote these books just as any normal and industrious person would have written them, when, as a matter of fact, we not only have H.P.B.'s repeated and candid statement that she wrote clairvoyantly and automatically, and not

as a learned woman, but we have the testimony of intelligent and honest persons that her statement was true. The evidence was just as good as any that the S.P.R. has put forth on its records. The first draft of her writings was always found full of mistakes and had to be carefully gone over and verified, often after prolonged and repeated efforts.

That her entire "Secret Doctrine," so called, had already found expression in other works does not detract from the task she had undertaken; and the collecting of so many authorities into a fairly consistent whole does not detract from the work. How many original thoughts have any of us? Is not our knowledge but the cementing together of innumerable bits from innumerable sources. We have the testimony of a great genius himself to this fact, and no less a genius than the great Goethe.

Emil Ludwig in his *Goethe: the History of a Man*,[1] quotes the following:

"What if I wish to be honest, did I possess that which was really my own, beyond capacity and inclination to see and hear . . . and render with some skill? I owe my achievements . . . to thousands of things and persons outside myself, which constituted my material. Fools and sages, clear-brained men and narrow-minded men, children and young people, to say nothing of ripe seniors—they all came to me, all told me how things struck them . . . and all I had to do was to catch hold of it, and reap what others had sown for me. . . . The main thing is to have a

[1] *Goethe: the History of a Man:* by Emil Ludwig. Translated from the German by Ethel Colburn Mayne.

great desire, and skill and perseverance to accomplish it. . . . Mirabeau was quite right to make as much use as he could of other people and their capabilities . . . my work is that of a composite being, and happens to be signed—GOETHE."

William Emmett Coleman was an ardent American spiritualist, and the Theosophical Society angered him; he was only too ready to attack H.P.B., and the English Society for Psychical Research was just as eager to pick up anyone who could further their purpose in their attack.

This supposed Orientalist is willing to spend three years in counting these quotations. That's work for a penny-a-liner. I wonder if I can hire him to count for me the "a's" in Mother Goose; it might prove interesting to know. This oriental scholar does not give us his degrees, and the list of societies of which he is a member in a footnote is not imposing; most of them have nothing to do with oriental scholarship. You may praise the man for his industry, but you cannot praise the S.P.R. for its methods of detecting the criminal. I prefer Scotland Yard, or better still, the Paris Sûreté.[1]

[1] I would refer the reader to an article in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* for March 15th, 1878, entitled "The Knout, as wielded by the great Russian Theosophist." Mr. Coleman's first appearance republished in *A Modern Panarion*, page 158.

MARKS OF GENIUS

" Errare, mehercule, malo cum Platone, quem tu quanti facias scio, et quem ex tuo ore admiror, quam cum istis vera sentire."
Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, Book I, Chapter XVII.

In the *Illustrated London News* for August 13th, 1927, G. K. Chesterton finished his usually brilliant weekly essay with these words: "M. Paul Claudel, the French poet, in writing to a French free-thinker, spoke with a splendid scorn of a remark of Renan, 'Perhaps, after all, the truth is depressing,' and appended to it some such words as these: 'When I read that I was not even a Christian myself; but I knew such divine documents as the Ninth Symphony and the Choruses of Sophocles; and I knew that a positive, passionate, living, and everlasting joy is the only reality."[1]. . .

These words of M. Claudel are a pure echo of the esoteric philosophy of the East with its teachings of peace and rest and infinite bliss,

[1] As an offset to this I read in the *American Mercury*, of July, 1927, p. 288, in an editorial signed by the initials H.L.M., which I take to stand for Mencken, the following words: "The aim of poetry is to give a high and voluptuous plausibility to what is palpably not true. I offer the Twenty-Third Psalm as an example: 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.' It is immensely esteemed by the inmates of almshouses, and gentlemen about to be hanged." Even if this was meant as a joke it is a beastly sacrilege. It was probably read by thousands of people without any emotion; and as many millions of people to-day prefer jazz to the Ninth Symphony, and the Charleston and the Black Bottom to the Dance of Nymphs and the Greek Chorus, we can understand the popularity and the howling success of the *American Mercury*.

known as Ananda, and the Eastern ascetics who claim to have attained this infinite bliss, put Ananda on to their names, like Vivakananda, or Abedananda. Roughly, it corresponds to the idea of heaven and paradise. The great difference is that with the Western theologian this heaven or paradise comes only to the purified soul after the death of the body, while the Eastern ascetic and philosopher claims it comes while the immortal soul is still in the body, but only when in the consuming fire of truth all the low elements of egotism and physical desires have been burnt out. Perhaps I should have first started with the statement that while intellectually and emotionally we can appreciate genius, in whatever shape it may come to us, it were idle to attempt to analyse it or to approach in any way the solution of the mystery of genius unless we take it for granted that man has an immortal soul, or at least has a Self which can exist independently of the material body as we know it.

Now there are several ways by which we can approach the subject. The purely intellectual way by a study of the works of genius does not carry us anywhere. All we can say is, this is a work of genius, but what it is, or whence it came, we know nothing. The great scholar becomes the mere intellectual grubber; he can only show us the matter of fact things of the world; he can only show us his great acquisitive powers; he may show us fine logical reasoning, as we understand logic, but we are not getting below the surface, while the scholar has only the satisfaction of feeling that he knows more *in a certain way* than the poor labouring man. But don't forget

that the poor labouring man may know a great deal more of what is below the service than the self-satisfied scholar. Truth comes not to great learning alone, it comes to something else ; as a matter of fact, great learning may stand in the way. It must be admitted, however, that learning or scholarship may make genius more effective, may enlarge its scope, that is, provided the mind is constituted to produce a creative work of genius. That Shelley read Euripides in the original and thumbed a copy in his pocket probably did stimulate his poetic expression and add to its great beauty ; but, on the other hand, Keats, who had no classical learning, read Homer in Chapman's translation, and even through the English words his great genius caught the spirit of the great Grecian, and in a short poem has entranced those who could appreciate his genius. It goes to show that genius can look at a little flower or a sunset and see the glory of God and his handiwork. "There exists among men a mighty complex of conceptions which lie apart from—some say beyond—articulate speech and reasoned thought. There is a march and uprising through ideal spaces which some hold as the only true ascent ; there is an architecture which some count as alone abiding—'Seeing it is built of music, therefore never built at all, and, therefore built for ever.' "[1]

But let us pass from the mere appreciation intellectually of genius and consider in what way or ways other than through the mere discursive and bound intellect we can approach the great mystery. We might even ask ourselves : Has

[1] Myers, Vol. I, p. 102.

the mere material brain anything to do with it? Is not genius something back of the material brain, and back of this body of ours, beautiful as it is? Personally, I have such a reverence and admiration for the body as God's handiwork and as a form of spirit itself that I cannot believe the spirit can inhabit the body unless that body were itself a form of spirit, simply in God's occult way made visible to the senses. As the great poet, Spencer, in well-known lines has said, the spirit really makes the body,—one of the greatest truths ever proclaimed, which it were well for the evolutionists to carefully consider. I am myself an evolutionist, but in a far different way from that taught by Darwin and his followers, as I have already expressed in print.

But how can we approach the subject? Is there any way open to us outside of the mere intellect? Can we get it from religion as ordinarily understood? Is it preached from the pulpit? Do we find it in Biblical exegesis? Can we find it in sacred history? It can be found in the New Testament; it can be found in the Psalms; it can be found in the esoteric religions other than Christian; and it can be found in the life of Jesus; it can be found in the histories of all the real saints; but it can be found only from a certain standpoint and in a certain spiritual attitude.

We have two main sources to help us, a true psychology and the experiences of saintship. And by psychology I do not mean the psychology taught in the universities, which is usually psychology with the psyche left out. This psychology is really the physiology of the brain

and nervous system, all very good, and all very proper, as necessary as any branch of science, but it is not psychology properly so called. Academic, or official, psychology has finally recognized a consciousness other than the ordinary waking consciousness of ordinary waking life. It took it a long time to recognize it, and it was discovered not by official psychology, but by minds that were laughed at when hypnotism was first proclaimed by those who bore no relationship with official science. It was called a hocus-pocus, and never became an established fact till Charcot and his followers demonstrated it in the clinic, or from the University chair. Many of the so-called uneducated saw its reality, but the world wanted the official stamp.

And now the pendulum has even swung to the other side, for we hear of the philosophy of the unconscious, whatever that may mean, as though from a logical standpoint there was any such thing in the universe, except in an absolute void, which does not exist mathematically or intellectually or philosophically, or even expressed by zero.

If we admit the *I am I* in man, where can we stop? Can we stop at the animal kingdom? Can we stop at the vegetable kingdom? Can we deny that the tree has a consciousness of its treeness? Can we stop at the mineral kingdom? Can we stop at the atom? Can any matter exist without consciousness? Can the electron spin around the proton without the bliss of its spinning? Isn't it only a matter of degree between the consciousness of the electron spinning around the proton in the atom and the small boy's bliss

in the merry-go-round ?—One the infinitely little, and the other the infinitely lovely, or an approach to it. Again the words come to me that a positive, passionate living and everlasting joy is the only reality.

As I cannot consider genius as apart from immortality let us glance for a moment upon the mystery of immortality as treated by the psychologists and by the universities. There was founded at Harvard the Ingersoll Lectureship, where the subject of immortality is treated in a recognized, academic way. Men of recognized scholarship and academic reputation have from time to time been called upon to deliver a lecture on immortality in this course. I have not the list of these men, but I do know that Harvard is very chary of its favours, and the Harvard tradition is a castle with a very deep moat. Sir William Osler was a favoured one. Though great as he was as a physician and a man of science, his lecture carried us nowhere. So far as I know, no one with a burning belief in immortality was favoured, but there was one man who was both a psychologist and a Harvard professor who was one of the lecturers, and for the first time in the course a pregnant thought was presented as only Professor William James could present it, for he stood almost alone among the academic psychologists as one who could look beyond the neuron and the mere localization of the brain function. To him psychology was something more than the physiology of the nervous system. He argued that the transmissive theory of the so-called function of the brain was just as tenable as the productive theory ; that there were certain well

established facts which were more readily accounted for by this theory than by the productive theory; that, in fact, the productive theory could not account for them at all; that thought and consciousness were something back of the brain, and that the brain was simply a medium of transmission. Those who thought that thinking and consicousness were mere functions of the material brain, just as the production of bile was a function of the liver, were in a pit that had no bottom and no way out. In the notes to his published lecture, he quoted sympathetically Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, of Oxford, from his *Riddles of the Sphinx:* "That materialism is a hysteron proteron, a putting of the cart before the horse, which may be rectified by just inverting the connection between matter and consciousness. Matter is not that which produces consciousness but that which limits it."

And again, to quote Professor Schiller: "Matter is an admirably calculated machinery for regulating, limiting, and restraining the consciousness which it encases. . . . If the material encasement be coarse and simple, as in the lower organisms, it permits only a little intelligence to permeate through it; if it is delicate and complex, it leaves more pores and exits, as it were, for the manifestations of consciousness. . . . On this analogy, then, we may say that the lower animals are still entranced in the lower stages of brute *lethargy*, while we have passed into the higher phase of *somnambulism*, which already permits us strange glimpses of a lucidity that divines the realities of a transcendent world."

Professor Schiller was at one time connected

with a great American university which did not appreciate him, but he was at once received with open arms by the University of Oxford. He has since proved himself a great psychologist and a great writer.

It is a significant fact that Harvard University has not seen fit to invite men for the Ingersoll Lectureship who, besides their learning, had a firm faith in their immortality and could support their faith by their own realization and academic learning. There are many of these men in India, graduates of Oxford and Cambridge. I have in mind especially P. Râmanâthan, K.C., C.M.G., Solicitor-General of Ceylon, whose published works are ample evidence of his great scholarship and of his knowledge of Eastern philosophy. I have no doubt that he is himself an ascetic and a Knower of the Soul.

My father once induced him to deliver a lecture before an American university, but he was quite too much for the ordinary academic professor. He tried to describe the state of isolation or aloneness, known in India as *Kaivalya*, where the soul comes face to face with itself, and God who is in it. They could not think of knowing anything outside of the discursive intellect. They might admit that the intellect alone could not know the soul of man, but they could not admit that the soul alone could know the real self as distinct from the body.

A quarter of a century ago there was published posthumously two large volumes entitled *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, by Frederick W. H. Myers. Professor Myers was not only a psychologist in the true sense of the word,

but he had the stamp of the University upon him, and was classical lecturer at the University of Cambridge. He was considered the first Virgil scholar in England. As a matter of fact, his classical training was the best that an English university could give. His prose and his poetry place him definitely in the class with genius, and his untimely death was an irreparable loss to scholarship and to the higher psychology.

In the first volume there is a long chapter on genius. My father was so impressed by his treatment of the subject that he wrote to the publishers begging them to have this chapter separately published in book form, and it would have made a very handy little volume. The publishers objected, as well as the family; and there was at least this basis for the objection that other chapters in the book had a close relationship to this special chapter. This work must stand as an *opus magnum*. It was based on the long and sympathetic work of Professor Myers as a member of the English Society for Psychical Research. Its influence has been world wide. Certainly the Boston Society for Psychic Research was a good first follower along the same lines.

In this chapter, Professor Myers characterizes genius as an "uprush" from a deeper consciousness, from a diviner self, from a deeper consciousness than the ordinary consciousness which we understand as the *I am I*. The whole chapter would have to be read to take in the full scope of his treatment of the subject, as well as its brilliancy. I shall only quote three paragraphs to give a general idea of his views. In a skilful way Mr. Myers compares the different depths of

consciousness to the solar spectrum and those regions which lie beyond normal vision.

"I am not indeed here assuming that the faculty which is at the service of the man of genius is of a kind different from that of common men, in such a sense that it would need to be represented by a prolongation of either end of the conscious spectrum. Rather it will be represented by such a brightening of the familiar spectrum as may follow upon an intensification of the central glow.

"The solar spectrum itself, as all know, is by no means a uniform or continuous band of coloured lights. It contains many dark lines, where some element held in vaporous suspension absorbs the special line of light which the still hotter vapour of that same element characteristically emits. Still more dimmed and interrupted are the spectra of some other stars. Bands and bars of comparative darkness stud their dispersed light. Even thus the spectrum of man's conscious faculty is not a continuous but a banded spectrum. There are groups of the dark lines of obstruction and incapacity, and even in the best of us a dim, unequal glow.

"It will, then, be the special characteristic of genius that its uprushes of sumliminal faculty will make the bright parts of the habitual spectrum more brilliant, will kindle the dim absorption-bands to fuller brightness, and will even raise quite dark lines into an occasional glimmer. But if, as I believe, we can best give to the idea of genius some useful distinctness by regarding it in such way as this, we shall find also that genius will fall into line with many other sensory and

motor automotisms to which the word could not naturally be applied. Genius represents a narrow selection among a great many cognate phenomena,—among a great many uprushes or emergencies of subliminal faculty both within and beyond the limits of the ordinary conscious spectrum."[1]

And now official psychology is treating of the subconscious state, one it has long pooh-poohed, and in many instances it is making a mess of it. Personally, I get nothing out of these books. If the new catch-word and fashion known as "Behaviorism" gives us any glimpses into the human soul I am not aware of it. Mr. Myers tries to show that through a study of certain forms of automatisms, and an analysis of works of genius, especially where the authors have attempted to show how they produced their work, he has more fully elaborated his theory of genius as an "uprush" from this deeper consciousness.

As a starting point he gives some examples of mathematical prodigies where it is quite evident that the ordinary mental processes of the schools can have no predominant influence in the case.

A small boy of six years, walking with his father before breakfast, asked his father at what hour he was born. He was told 4 a.m. What o'clock is it now? He was told 7.50 a.m. In a short while the child told his father how many seconds he had lived. The father on returning home made the calculation and told his son he had made a mistake of 172,800 seconds, to which the child replied: "Oh, papa, you have left out the two

[1] Myers, Vol. I, p. 78.

days for the leap years, 1820 and 1824." Now this is not ordinary schoolroom mentality, however brilliant, but something a great deal more. These examples might be increased to great length, and examples demanding a more subtle mathematical mind. Professor Myers gives these examples as admitting of some degree of quantitative measurement.

Of his manner of work, De Musset wrote : " On ne travaille pas, on écoute, c'est comme un inconnu que vous parle à l'oreille."

And Lamartine : " Ce n'est pas moi qui pense ; ce sont mes idées qui pensent pour moi."

These expressions are illuminating. Mr. Myers analyses at some length George Sand and Wordsworth, both having given some idea of how they produced their work, and especially Wordsworth.

George Sand in a way was the most remarkable woman of her generation. While in her youth she ignored conventions, her mature years were those of calm and normalcy, to use a word which I do not very much like. Her portrait by Thomas Couture shows a face of great calm and character. Mr. Myers writes :

" George Sand throughout long years of healthy maturity and age formed a striking example of the combination of enormous imaginative productiveness with inward tranquillity and meditative calm. What George Sand felt in the act of composition was a continuous and effortless flow of ideas, sometimes with and sometimes without an apparent *externalization* of the characters who spoke in her romances."

We have another interesting example with Dickens. Mrs. Gamp, his greatest creation, he

tells us (generally in church), spoke to him as with an inward monitory voice."[1]

Quotations might be given indefinitely where the poets and artists have given expression to their mental and spiritual states while under the spell of creative work; but I must quote from Mr. Myers certain passages from Wordsworth which give perhaps fuller expression to that spiritual state which produces a work of art which the world recognizes as a work of genius. I might mention in passing that Lord Tennyson has himself tried in well known lines to give some idea of this state, which has been described as ecstasy, or trance, where the consciousness becomes intensified and expands apparently to a limitless extent.

"Let us begin with the strictly limited inquiry from which we started, and let us consider merely the description given by this one poet of the *apparent content* of moments of profound inspiration. We find Wordsworth insisting, in the first place, upon the *distinctive character* of this subliminal uprush.

"He speaks of the 'haze within,' which becomes

> 'A tempest, a redundant energy
> Vexing its own creation.'

"Of 'imagination' he says (Book VI):

> 'That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss,
> Like an unfathomed vapour that enwraps,
> At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
> Halted without an effort to break through;
> But to my conscious soul I now can say:
> 'I recognise thy glory'; in such strength
> Of usurpation, when the light of sense
> Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
> The invisible world, doth greatness make abode.'

[1] Myers, Vol. I, p. 106.

"Of childish hours the poet says:

'Even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield; the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things.'

"And in a further stage he writes:

'An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour.'

"And still further:

'Bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.'

"And again:

'In a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world.'[1]

Of course, the subject can be elaborated to vast proportions and to unmanageable bulk.

In a subsequent chapter, Mr. Myers has dwelt at length on Plotinus, who represents the Neo-Platonists, and who has described at length the mystery of trance and illumination, that entrance into a wider and deeper consciousness:

"So let the soul that is not unworthy of that Vision contemplate the Great Soul; freed from deceit and every witchery, and collected into calm. Calmed be the body for her in that hour, and the tumult of the flesh; ay, all that is about her, calm; calmed be the earth, the sea, the air, and let Heaven itself be still. Then let her feel how into that silent heaven the Great Soul

[1] Myers, Vol. I, pp. 110–111.

floweth in. . . . And so man's soul be sure of Vision, when suddenly she is filled with light; for this light is from Him, and is He; and then surely shall one know His presence when, like a god of old time, He entered into the house of one that calleth Him, and maketh it full of light." "And how," concludes Plotinus, "may this thing be for us? Let all else go."

In the study of literature as literature the discriminating student must see a vast difference between merely intellectual and research work, and that creative work known as genius. And the more we study carefully this difference the more does Mr. Myers' theory come to us at least as a working hypothesis and a guide to distinguish the two forms of literary production. If we study, for example, the literary work of Macaulay as a historian, we see at once great talent and great scholarship, and we also see throughout the whole work *a great uniformity*. There is a high level of literary excellence, but we fail to get any of those uprushes from the deeper self which mark the character of genius. Even in the *Lays of Ancient Rome* we are still on the borderland of that faery land of fancy; but this nearer approach to this faery land will give the lays a longer life than the history. Gibbon's history, a greater work, is still the result of great research and learning, and will long stand as a monumental work, but it may well be questioned whether his prose approaches closer to this mystic land of fancy. An impassioned prose can show genius just as clearly as the poetic form. Lincoln's Address at Gettysburg is a good example.

In the study of poetry, even among the greatest

poets, we do not get uniformity. There are vast differences showing how differently the uprushes have come. It is unnecessary to quote examples. All lovers of literature will see this.

Many years ago Max Nordau wrote a voluminous work on "Degeneration," to try to show that genius was abnormal and allied to insanity. I reviewed the work and criticized it severely at the time. He could not show that genius itself was abnormal, however many examples he could bring forward as concomitants of genius. The brain, as a physical organ of the physical body, controls it. The ordinary moral and steady man, alive to all conventions, under the direct control of the supraliminal world escapes many of the dangers where this brain and will are less cohesive and less efficient, and where deeper forms of consciousness take control, and the will and the nervous system show less balance and less efficiency. How often do we find that where there is brain degeneracy the reflexes are over active, showing that the spinal cord has more control. And so with genius, the deeper self ignores more the ordinary man, with his conventions and his steadiness, and his will to do as his good neighbour does. It becomes a law unto itself, and while the man must come within the jurisdiction of the law and the police-court, the world should think of him more as an unfortunate in polite society than as a criminal to be punished. Of course, many great geniuses could be mentioned who were everything that society could demand, and who were admired as men of great character and uprightness. The great thing is to discriminate between the normal deep self and the physical

THE RICHARDSON COTTAGE

Temporarily occupied by Professor Corson in 1875, at the time of H. P. B.'s visit.

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organism through which it has to function. The artist is real, but the instrument is out of tune.

The time has come when psychical research must be recognized as a valuable contribution to psychology, let alone its efforts to prove survival after bodily death. As a matter of fact, there are many centres all over the civilized world where men of intellect and real scientific ability are studying the phenomena of the unusual and the supernormal, mental and psychical states, viewed with a sympathetic yet not uncritical or unscientific attitude. The English, French, German, and Italian investigators have produced a great mass of observations and literature on automatism, both motor and visual, and we are beginning to see into the secrets of the subconscious as well as the deepest regions of consciousness, showing us how little of the real self we are aware of, a self which seems without limit, apparently omniscient and all powerful, beyond all limitations of time and space, and where earthly things and interests grow pale and indistinct.

During Mr. Myers' life automatic writing, so called, had not advanced or shown much to us of the subconscious, beyond mere descriptive writing, and so-called evidential stuff, pointing to the survival of the self after bodily death ; but since then, due undoubtedly to a greater general interest in the matter and more experimentation, this form of automatism has made great strides and has increased in quality in certain instances to an astounding extent. For instance, the literature concerning the Glastonbury scripts, and all the events and personages connected with its history, and the automatic drawings of the

great abbey, will long mark a great forward step in this line of psychical research. The scripts of Mrs. Hester Dowden are of equal value, and more recently the *Chronicles of Cleophas*, as automatically written by Miss Cummins, have been studied and criticized by the best Biblical scholars as to the accuracy of Hebrew and Greek terms or proper names relating to the time of Christ. They are of surpassing interest, and in our own country, a script known as *Patience Worth*, automatically written under the hand of a Mrs. Curran, of St. Louis, beginning with the *Sorry Tale*, published by Henry Holt & Co., has grown into such proportions as to demand its own publishing company, and even its own magazine, and where, outside of mere descriptive literature, we have evidence of real genius, and genius working with lightning rapidity, responsive to almost any subject.

Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, Ph.D., executive research officer of the Boston Society of Psychic Research, has just published a work of 509 pages, entitled *The Case of Patience Worth: A Critical Study of Certain Unusual Phenomena*. This book must attract wide attention for its critical and scientific worth, as well as for its literary value as mere literature. It should have a wide circulation.

In the *Sorry Tale*, also in our library, we have a life of Christ full of local colour, written in a spirit of deep reverence and piety. The language is archaic and dialectal, which may deter many from reading it, for the general public has grown so accustomed to facile reading, as well as facile thinking, that it has no time for more attentive

reading and thinking. The *Life of Christ* by Renan, long regarded as a very great work by a great scholar, and recognized as a great work in the literature of any country, may be viewed in comparison with the *Sorry Tale*. The life of Christ, aside from the study of the four Gospels, offers little enough for mere historical research and scholarship to the *dévot*. The subject demands a wholly different treatment. It ceases to be historical in a way and becomes an apotheosis of the divine person, the glorification of the Son of God, and the facts and teachings of the New Testament require the touch of genius where beautiful pictures and images are brought before the reader as a background to the mere teaching. In the *Sorry Tale* you can see that this has been attempted. The life of Christ has become a drama where we see before us the landscapes of Palestine and the streets of Jerusalem with its everyday life. It becomes a story, rather than a history. Christ becomes both the man and the divine person. We see the street scenes as in a moving picture, the very dogs in the street, and the ill-smelling camels, with their burdens, and as Christ and the persons connected with Him have been the theme for the greatest artists in the world, so the written picture demands unequalled genius. Now this has been at least attempted in the *Sorry Tale*. You feel that the treatment has been one of reverence and piety, and that the story has been told by a true follower.

I am glad to see the appearance of two new books which follow more closely the latter model. One is by a French writer, Alphonse Seche, *The Radiant Story of Jesus*, and the other is by a

Hindu, A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Baktimarga,* Baktimarga meaning the way of love. And let me say right here that the Hindu idea has always seemed to me more expressive of the divine Christ and His glorious presence and personality than the ordinary run of books on the subject in the Western world.

The case of Patience Worth has seemed to me of special interest and value as throwing some light on the mystery. Through the hand of one psychically gifted, but not to be classed with the elect, has come a literary effort giving undoubted evidence of genius. It is a sort of artificial genius. F. W. H. Myers alone seemed to see the value of certain psychical phenomena as an approach to the great mystery. His characterizations can all be checked off, so to speak, with certain phases of psychical phenomena ; the automatisms, the visualizations, the spontaneity, the tireless uprushes, and the winged and vitalized thoughts independent of the conscious or unconscious automaton. In *Patience Worth* we see it giving expression with lightning rapidity. While we often see this improvization, I know of no example outside the mathematical genius where the response is so immediate. The treasure is all there ready and eager for the uprush. The diver has picked his pearl and is anxious to reach the surface. Once only was there any hesitation, and that was when a child's prayer was asked for, and it took a month for its full expression ; when it came it was a real bit of genius, as much so as Newman's *Lead, Kindly Light,* and perhaps more difficult of accomplishment. Natural, or artificial, so called, basically they must be the same,

and the source, whatever the opening way, must also be the same. In the higher realms this opening way becomes as wide as the universe, and all is *simple comme bonjour*. I am quite sure that Shakespeare's greatest flights were the easiest.

I would point to a characteristic of genius not especially emphasized by Myers, but which is also found under other conditions and among other types of men.

In a presidential address before the American Philosophical Association at Columbia University, December 28th, 1906, by Professor William James, on "The Energies of Men," he has treated the subject in his usual lucid way. He speaks of the reservoirs of power which ordinary men fail to tap, but which, when available, increase man's actions and accomplishments far beyond our usual conceptions of his energies. Great emotional strains, great devotion to some coveted object, a burning sense of patriotism, and especially genius itself, may awaken dormant powers whose onward course no obstacles can stem. In its essence this energy is but a dominant and well-directed will. This will is what distinguishes men and gives them what we call character. As Novalis describes it, "A character is a completely fashioned will" (*Vollkommen gebildeter Wille*). The emotions lead to action, but there must be the will back of the emotion. We can point to many examples of this among geniuses. George Eliot could keep up long-sustained mental work without fatigue. Myers speaks of George Sand's long consecutive hours of composition. In a recent Life of her, entitled *George Sand, the Search for Love*, by Marie Jenny Howe, she gives us very definite details of

the wonderful flow of her productive work. She would sit for hours writing off page after page, sometimes to the break of day, and then take a long walk in the woods to get some fresh air in her lungs. Of course, there must be the "uprush from the subliminal self," but there must also be the will and energy to carry it along.

Now I contend that H.P.B. had this energy to a superlative degree. She had her uprushes, and with them "the thews of Anakim, the pulses of a titan's heart." I was fortunate to come across a letter from my father in which he writes: "Mme. B. has gone. Though there were many things unpleasant in her stay with us, altogether we enjoyed her visit. She is a very remarkable woman, a woman of a frantic intensity. I never knew such a worker. She would write from morning until midnight often, without stopping longer than to take dinner and make a cigarette. She smoked two hundred cigarettes in a day. Beardsley has taken some magnificent pictures of her. I shall send you one as soon as they are ready. . . ."

Here is another expression of my father in a letter dated October 2nd, 1875: "Mme. B. is still with us. She gives us a good deal of trouble, and we get very little from her in return, for she is occupied wholly with her own work. I had expected we should have some 'sittings' together; but she is not only not disposed, but is decidedly opposed to anything of the kind. She is a smart woman, but ignorant of all the graces and amenities of life. She is a great Russian bear."

This energy continued up to the last day of her life. Even near the end, when dropsical from

nephritis, she continued this Herculean effort as though the very world depended upon it.

As Witte wrote in his *Memoirs* : " Let him who still doubts the non-material origin and the independent existence of the soul in man, consider the personality of Madame Blavatsky. During her earthly existence she housed a spirit which was no doubt independent of physical and physiological being. As for the particular realm of the invisible world from which that spirit emerged, there may be some doubt whether it was inferno, purgatory, or paradise. I cannot help feeling that there was something demoniac in that extraordinary woman."

But we must make some allowance for the opinion of a very conservative, conventional, and ambitious diplomat whose ambitions were wholly material and selfish.

As Profesor Myers in his characterization allows the genius to describe his own psychical experience, we may allow H.P.B. to describe the workings of her own psyche, a description more intimate and more illuminating than any record we possess. Before her eyes passes a phantasmagoria of oriental splendour, richer than Kubla Khan, and yet infused with the images of the Western world ; it is a meeting of the East and the West, pictures in detail as well as composite.

In the course of another family letter, she writes :[1]

" Upon my word I can hardly understand why you and people generally should make such a fuss over my writings, whether Russian or English !

[1] *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky*, by A. P. Sinnett, George Redway, London, 1886.

True, during the long years of my absence from home, I have constantly studied and have learned certain things. But when I wrote *Isis* I wrote it so easily, that it was certainly no labour, but a real pleasure. Why should I be praised for it? Whenever I am *told* to write, I sit down and obey, and then I can write easily upon almost anything —metaphysics, psychology, philosophy, ancient religions, natural sciences, or what-not. I never put myself the question: '*Can* I write on this subject?' . . . or, 'Am I equal to the task?' but I simply sit down and *write*. Why? *Because somebody who knows all* dictates to me . . . MY MASTER, and occasionally others whom I knew in my travels years ago. . . . Please do not imagine that I have lost my senses. I have hinted to you before now about them . . . and I tell you candidly, that whenever I write upon a subject I know little or nothing of, I address myself to *Them*, and one of *Them* inspires me, i.e. he allows me to simply copy what I write from manuscripts, and even printed matter that pass before my eyes, in the air, during which process I have never been *unconscious* one single instant. . . . It is that knowledge of His protection and faith in His power that have enabled me to become mentally and spiritually so strong . . . and even He (the Master) is not always required; for, during His absence on some other occupation, He awakens in me His substitute in knowledge. . . . At such times it is no more *I* who write, but my *inner Ego*, my '*luminous self*,' who thinks and writes for me. Only see . . . you who know me. When was I ever so learned as to write such things? . . . Whence all this knowledge? . . . "

On another occasion again she wrote also to her sister :

"You may disbelieve me, but I tell you that in saying this I speak but the truth ; I am solely occupied, not with writing *Isis*, but with 'Isis' herself. I live in a kind of permanent enchantment, a life of visions and sights with open eyes, and no trance whatever to deceive my senses ! I sit and watch the fair goddess constantly. And as she displays before me the secret meaning of her long lost *secrets*, and the veil becoming with every hour thinner and more transparent, gradually falls off before my eyes, I hold my breath and can hardly trust to my senses. . . . For several years in order not to forget what I have learned elsewhere, I have been made to have permanently before my eyes all that I need to see. Thus, night and day, the images of the past are ever marshalled before my inner eye. Slowly, and gliding silently like images in an enchanted panorama, centuries after centuries appear before me . . . and I am made to connect these epochs with certain historical events, and *I know* there can be no mistake. Races and nations, countries and cities, emerge during some former century, then fade out and disappear during some other one, the precise date of which I am then told by . . . Hoary antiquity gives room to historical periods ; myths are explained by real events and personages who have really existed ; and every important and often unimportant event, every revolution, a new leaf turned in the book of life of nations—with its incipient course and subsequent natural results—remains photographed in my mind as though impressed in indelible colours.

. . . When I think and watch my thoughts, they appear to me as though they were like those little bits of wood of various shapes and colours, in the game known as the *casse tête:* I pick them up one by one, and try to make them fit each other, first taking one, then putting it aside, until I find its match, and finally there always comes out in the end something geometrically correct. . . . I certainly refuse point-blank to attribute it to my own knowledge or memory, for I could never arrive alone at either such premises or conclusions. . . . I tell you seriously *I am helped.* And he who helps me is my *Guru.* . . . "

There can be no difficulty in classifying this extraordinary spirit, and in classifying her we are following entirely the classification so eloquently set forth by Professor Myers. It was the spirit of a genius of one idea, of one purpose, of one absorbing desire, of one exalted idea, and she must be judged wholly as a genius and by what she accomplished.

LETTER No. 1.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.,

9th of February, 1875.

PROFESSOR HIRAM CORSON,

DEAR SIR,

Pardon me if, to all appearance, I have neglected to answer your very kind letter, received about a week ago. The fault is not mine, as you will see, but ought to be laid right to the door of my "Malchance," as the French Canadians say. I have nearly broken my leg about ten days ago and cannot leave my bed as yet; otherwise most assuredly I would not have risked even for a while to be thought so ill-mannered as that.

I have received many letters of thanks for my article, many undeserved compliments and very little practical help in the way of published statements supporting my theory, which is certainly built upon evident proofs. As an illustration of the moral cowardice prevailing among spiritualists, I take the liberty of sending you a letter just received by me from Gen. Lippett, the Commissioner, sent by the *Banner of Light* to this city, with the special purpose of investigating thoroughly the Katie King mystery. He has done so, and he has discovered beyond any doubt the culpability of Dr. Child. He has in his possession the testimony of two well known photographers

whom the Hon. "Father Confessor" has bribed for the speculating purpose of obtaining Katie's portrait by taking it from this creature White. The *Banner* has refused as you see point blank to publish anything against Dr. Child.

Talk after that of the wisdom of the old mottoes and proverbs, and let us repeat if we dare about innocence and virtue being rewarded and vice punished! Well, I do think that old dame Truth has deserted for ever your beautiful shores. At least, by what I can judge from my own experience of over eighteen months' residence in your country, the old lady must be resting in undisturbed repose as in a state of deep trance at the bottom of her native well.

There, I am unable to move in the perfect impossibility of leaving my room and my articles sure to be henceforth refused.

I possess several valuable documents against our Philadelphian prophet, among others the sworn statement of a voluntary witness, which would kill Dr. Child if ever it was brought against him in a Court of Justice. But—it never will; for the Doctor is as cautious as he is peculating, declines answering me even in print, it seems. And to think that I was simple-minded enough to hope that he would try and sue me for libel, for it was the only way to force him into a Court of Justice.

My dear sir, would it be impossible for you to publish a few words stating your opinion as to the matter. A few lines from you that the *Banner* is sensible enough to appreciate, and would never dare to refuse, would go far against our fraudulent prophet. The editors will print nothing more

from me, for they say " there is no knowing where my literary Russian bombs may explode." The only good result that has been brought about by my article, as soon as it appeared, was the immediate resignation of Dr. Child from his office of the President of Spiritual Association of Philadelphia ; otherwise he plays at " dummy," and is to be seen or heard nowhere.

I came to this country only on account of Truth in Spiritualism, but I am afraid I will have to give it up. We shall never be able to draw the line of demarcation between the true and the false as long as the so-called pillars of spiritualism will, notwithstanding their half-rotten and unreliable condition, be supported and helped out to the last by the too lenient backs of the cowardly spiritualists. Would the Holmses ever dare fool and swindle the public as they did if they had not been backed and screened by Dr. Child until three thousand dollars offered him by the Y.M.C.A. proved too much for his tender soul, and he had to turn a modern spiritual Judas and sell out his Christ to the highest bidder. Now, the Holmses, frauds as they partly are, are still genuine mediums, and no mistake, and if there is some excuse for them for the perpetration of such a swindle, it lies in the "*circonstance atténante*" of the perpetual danger of starvation, as in the case of most of the public mediums. As for Dr. Child, a gentleman and a man known to be wealthy, there is no excuse for him, and such a character as that ought to be horsewhipped. His participation—in my eyes at least—in this fraud, is worse than robbery, worse than the murder of a human being ; it is a nameless crime, one of blasphemy,

sacrilegious derision and pollution of the most holy, sacred feelings treasured in the souls of all spiritualists.

He has done his work for one of us at least; poor old Robert D. Owen will not recover from the shock he experienced by the same hand that led him into the belief in the pure Spirit. He is 73 years of age and does not leave a sick bed from the moment of the exposure. I know it is his death blow.

That's why I hate Childs so bitterly.

Excuse my long letter, dear sir, in favour of the sincerity of my feelings, strong and too impetuous as they may seem to you, perhaps.

With sincere regards of esteem, dear sir.

Truly yours,

(signed) H. P. BLAVATSKY.

The Holmses have vanished from town and I took the house they used to live in, *for purposes you may guess.*

825 North 10th Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

LETTER No. 2.

This letter was posted in an envelope of Betanelly & Co., Russian-American Commission Merchants, Philadelphia, Pa. The postmark is February 16th, and the year is evidently 1875. The letter itself has no date, but is simply Philadelphia, Tuesday.

PROFESSOR HIRAM CORSON.

DEAR SIR,

Just received yours, and many thanks for the readiness with which you undertake the defence of *Truth*. With my letter you may do as you please; use my name, bring me out as a witness, just whatever you may think proper. I can as readily answer for Gen. Lippett's consent, though, not having his permission for it, I suppose it more advisable to lay it all to my door, and state that you learned the particulars about the cowardice of the *Banner of Light* through me, for I do not care if the editors get a grudge against me. I am perfectly independent of them, but Lippitt is employed by them, and his means are very limited. Just say that I wrote you, copying textually his letter. I send you at the same time a very precious document, copied by the writer himself from an original letter that he sent me in the presence of Gen. Lippitt, whose signature you will find at the bottom as a witness to the transaction. I have five more witnesses.

I am here in this country sent by my Lodge

on behalf of Truth in modern spiritualism, and it is my most sacred duty to unveil what is, and expose what is not. Perhaps did I arrive here one hundred years too soon. May be, and I am afraid it is so, that in this present state of mental confusion, of doubt, of the endless and fruitless conflicts between the Tyndalls and Wallaces, the issues of which are arrested by the almighty power of the dollar,—for people seem to care every day less for truth and every hour more for gold,—my feeble protest and endeavours will be of no avail ; nevertheless, I am ever ready for the grand battle, and perfectly prepared to bear any consequences that may fall to my lot.

I pray you, do not take me to be a " blind fanatic," for, if I am the latter, I am not the former. When I became a spiritualist, it was not through the agency of the ever-lying, cheating mediums, miserable instruments of the undeveloped Spirits of the lower Sphere, the ancient Hades. My belief is based on something older than the Rochester knockings, and springs out from the same source of information that was used by Raymond Lully, Picus della Mirandola, Cornelius Agrippa, Robert Fludd, Henry More, et cetera, etc., all of whom have ever been searching for a system that should disclose to them the " deepest depths " of the Divine nature, and show them the real tie which binds all things together. I found at last, and many years ago, the cravings of my mind satisfied by this theosophy taught by the Angels and communicated by them that the protoplast might know it for the aid of the human destiny. The practical, however small knowledge of the Principle, Ain-Soph, or the Endless and the

Boundless with its ten Sephiroths or Emanations, goes more towards opening your eyes than all the hypothetical teachings of the leaders of Spiritualism, let them be American or European. In my eyes, Allan Kardec and Flammarion, Andrew Jackson Davis and Judge Edmonds, are but schoolboys just trying to spell their A B C and sorely blundering sometimes. The relation between the two is in just proportion what were in the ancient ages the book called *Sohar*, based on the perfect knowledge of the Kabbala handed down by oral tradition from David and Solomon to Simon ben Jochai, the first man who dared write it down, and the *Massorah*, a book based on outside, not direct tradition, and which never vouchsafed the truth of what it taught.

I do not know why I write you all this. Perhaps it does not interest you in the least ; perhaps you will find me presumptuous, conceited, boasting, and a bore. I must beg of you to account for it in one way at least, viz. the great desire I have to hear responding echoes, to seek for them whenever and wherever I can, in the only hope of being occasionally answered. If the Doctrine of the "Aged of the Aged" of Sephira, its first-born, the Macroprosophos, etc., is a thing you never troubled yourself of investigating, then let it drop at once, and consigning me for ever in the annals of your memory with the demented and crazy dreamers of the age, believe me only

Gratefully and truly yours,

(signed) H. P. Blavatsky.

825 North Tenth Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

LETTER No. 3

PHILADELPHIA,

PROFESSOR H. CORSON, *March 6th.*

DEAR SIR,

Kindly forgive me for intruding once more —unwelcome this time maybe—on your valuable time. I know that I should not be disturbing you now, for somehow or other I feel that, as the French say, " Vous-avez d'autre chats à fouetter en ce moment," and my new message risks to become an unasked guest. But at the same time I feel sure that you are not one of those who begins a job and leaves it unfinished. Your article has appeared, and I am glad of it ; I knew Colby would never dare refuse you. My article was sent ten days ago, and will never appear, I am afraid ; and so, I take the liberty of forwarding it to you for perusal when you have a moment to spare for it. As you will see, it's a new proof against Dr. Child. I enclose together with it the statement of a man named Westcott who was present when the bargain between the " father confessor " and Mrs. Holmes for ten dollars a séance was made. In his *Sunshine*, that Colby wants to pass off as an answer to my question, Child does not dare deny, as you see ; he only tries his best to influence his readers' hearts, and says I " fabricate stories."

I hope and pray for truth's sake and justice's

sake that you will be able to finish what Colby is determined not to let me do—to wit: unmask the lying villain.

With profound esteem and regard,

Yours truly,

H. P. Blavatsky.

When you are through with my article, please forward it to Mrs. L. Andrews, Springfield, when you write her. I wonder if I could not have it published in the *Springfield Republican* by paying for it? I am ready to pay any sum of money for it. Please find enclosed a letter from General Lippitt, that will show you how our leading spiritualist paper is ready to die for truth.

LETTER No. 4

PHILADELPHIA,

March 20th (1875).

PROFESSOR H. CORSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am all swollen up, my face as big as a pumpkin, and I feel like *dematerializing*, dissolving, but I feel so glad at the same time of having received such a kind friendly letter from you, that I forget all my ailings and sit down right away for the purpose of only telling you that I appreciate deeply, *very* deeply indeed, all your kindness to a woman, a stranger, that I am afraid you will find, when you know her better, not to deserve this kindness so much as you think, perhaps. Alas! my dear Sir, I am really very very vicious in my own way, and unpardonably so in the eyes of every true American. My only hope for the future is that you may turn out to be more of a man, a true-hearted, noble-minded man, than of an American; then perhaps you may forgive me my Russian vices and put up with them for the sake of charity. I feel so happy to think that I may have a chance of passing a week or two in the society of my two correspondents and, may I add, friends—you and Mrs. Andrews. I am so scared at the same time when I come to think how utterly disenchanted you may both of you feel, and how shocked

Mrs. Corson may feel, though she is not an American but a French lady, who knows better than your own nation does what we Russians are. You invite me so kindly to the Cascade; but what will you say when you see your guest stealing away from the room every fifteen minutes to go and hide behind the doors and in the yards and basements to smoke a cigarette? I am obliged here to confess that I, like all the women of Russia, smoke in my drawing-room as in the drawing-room of every respectable lady from an aristocratic princess down to the wife of an employee; they smoke according to our national custom in the carriage as well as in the foyer of the theatres. I am actually obliged to hide myself like a thief; for the Americans have insulted me and stared me out of countenance, and published about me in the papers, ornamenting my poor self with the most wonderful names, and inventing about me stories, and so forth, till, unable to give up an innocent habit of more than twenty years standing, I was finally driven to what I consider to be a mean act of cowardice; doing what I am ashamed here in America to proclaim in the face of the world. But if you can forgive me my national sins, then, of course, I will be most happy to avail myself of your kind invitation. A thousand times I thank you and Mrs. Corson, to whom I beg you will present my most sincere compliments, and ask her beforehand for some indulgence and charity for a poor barbarian who has fallen down from her Cossack-land in your civilized country like some ill-shaped aerolite from the moon. Tell her I promise never to smoke in her drawing-room. If after my confession

Mrs. Corson is brave enough to repeat her invitation, I can go and seek out the company of the hamadryads in the silent woods. With the dear, sincere, truthful Mrs. Andrews I was more sincere still, if I remember right. Heavens be merciful unto me, but I do think that to her friendly invitation to come and visit her one of these days at Springfield I actually confessed to her that I very often swore in Russian. I do not know yet how she bore the shock, but I do hope that this fatal revelation did not kill her on the spot.

Oh! dear me! you will have a nice idea of your correspondent now since I have devoted four pages to confess my two most disgusting vices, but I like always to have people see my worst side at first, so that if they happen to find out some particle of genuine gold in a heavy, bad penny, so much the better for the penny.

I have not changed my residence, but it is always better to send the letters to my P.O. box 2828, as I am obliged to absent myself from town every now and then on spiritualistic business; as I told you, I was sent to this country by my Society, and the letters may be mislaid sometimes.

It is sad indeed, as you say, that Truth has to beg and pray and humble herself to be admitted into the leading organ of the spiritualists of this country, when lies have only to send in their cards to be received with outstretched arms. For instance, there is in the last *Banner* an account of one Mr. Wood, who pretends he saw his wife at a séance given by Mrs. Holmes. Now I know it to be a falsehood. In the first place, no respectable wife, dead or alive, will ever materialize through such a source of vile impurity as this Mrs. Holmes

happens to be, to the greatest disgrace of us spiritualists. Then, a certain old lady, Mrs. Lippincott, in whose house the séance took place, assured me most emphatically that on that same evening the medium was found tricking and cheating; but the old gentleman who wrote this wonderful account is a half-crazy lunatic, who happens to see his wife in every corner, under the chairs, and in each glass of whiskey he swallows. "Et c'est ainsi que l'on écrit l'histoire!" Poor spiritualism!

Most certainly I am ready to do anything you or Mrs. Andrews think proper. You may curtail the article, trim it, and even crop it in a Sing-Sing fashion if you think it will do any good; but I really think that for the sake of the cause, we spiritualists ought not to too much humble ourselves when we know we are right. Don't think for a moment, my dear Mr. Corson, that it is vanity or author's pride that speaks in me. If I write well enough in other languages, and I know I do, I know well at the same time that I have nothing to boast of in my English articles; and if it was not for the thought and moral certitude that truth, however badly dressed, must always conquer, I would never have dared to come out in polemics in the arena of English literature. I guess you, a professor of English philology and literature, have often laughed at my Muscovite expressions. I wish to goodness I could make you laugh heartily, for it seems to me you sadly need to. I can't say more, and could not if I would, for I can never, somehow or other, express what I feel unless I fight for it. I am a poor hand for any outward show of sympathy or

compliments, and there are many things I would never dare touch, for those wounds are so deep that they cut through the very centre of the heart, and my hands are so rough that I dare not trust to them. One thing I must say, though, for I can't help it. I am sorry to see that you, a spiritualist, and knowing yourself that you use a wrong expression, still pronounce the word "lost" or "dead." Now, it seems to me that this sounds like a profanation. We insult our beloved ones apparently gone so far yet still nearer than ever. There is but one death in nature, and that is the moral death of a person in our hearts when the bad actions and deeds of this person compel us to bury him for ever in our soul's memory, and the remembrance vanished to the last particle. How can your pure, beautiful, innocent child be dead? Did not she, apparently to us, suffer *unjustly* the penalty of her living in this world, and being confined in her prison of clay? This same apparent injustice should be to us spiritualists the most apparent convincing proof of the immortality of our spirit, that's to say, to every one who firmly believes in a just omnipotent God as a Principle of everything. What harm did she ever do? What sin could she have committed to have been made to suffer as she did? Her physical death was but a proof that she was ready before her natural term of years to live in spirit henceforth in a better world. As I once wrote to Mrs. Andrews about the loss of her young son Harold, I have yet enough left in me of love for poor humanity to rejoice when I see children and poor young people die. "Too good to live in this world" is not an

idle saying. It is a profound philosophical verity. What really devoted father or mother would not consent to become blind for the sake of the eternal felicity of their beloved children? Would not you? Is not caecity worse in such a case? for it makes everything vanish out of sight for ever, whereas now you cannot see one dear one only. To this you may object that a blind man can at least feel or hear the voice of one lost to sight. But cannot you feel and hear her the same as ever? Did you ever try? Oh, how I wish I could teach you some things you seem to know nothing of as yet. How happy you could be then! American spiritualism is dreadful in some things; it's killing, for it really brushes close materialism, sometimes. Why should you go and profanate the names of your best-beloved, your departed ones, the holy spirits inhabiting regions in atmospheres as pure and holy as themselves, by breathing their names to dirty, venal paid mediums, when you have all the means within *yourselves* to communicate and visit and receive visits from your departed! How willingly would I devote all my life, nay, sacrifice it even, if I could only impart to some bereaved fathers and mothers, sons, and often daughters, the grandest truth that ever was, a truth so easily learned and practised for whomever is endowed with a powerful will and *faith*. I have said too little or too much, I know not which. By the fruit shall we judge of the seed. Amen.

You want to know about the *Revue Spirite*. I comply with your request, the more willingly as I know well and consider M. Leymarie, the editor of it, my friend. This journal or periodical

is the best in France. It is highly moral and truthful and interesting. Of course, the direction of it is purely kardec-like, for the book was the creation of the "Maître" himself, as French Spiritistes, the *re-incarnationists*, call Allan Kardec, and was left, furthermore, as an heirloom by the latter to Leymarie. The widow, Madame A. Kardec, is one of the noblest and purest women living. The Spiritistes have a slight tendency to ritualism and dogma, but this is but a slight shadow of their Catholic education, a habit innate in this people who jump so quickly from Popish slavery to materialism or spiritualism. Mrs. Corson will not repent if she subscribes for it. I find fault with them for one thing, not with the *Revue Spirite*, but with the teaching itself, namely, that they are re-incarnationists and zealous missionaries for the same. They could never do anything with me in that way so they gave me up in disgust, but we still are friends. Monsieur and Madame Leymairie are both of them highly cultured people, and truthful and sincere as gold. For you, dear Sir, if I can make so bold as to give you advice, subscribe to the Boston *Spiritual Scientist*. It is a worthy little paper, and the tendency is good, though they are as poor as poverty itself. I have a good mind to send my article to be published in that paper ; they have very good articles sometimes and, moreover, print all they find of interest in foreign spiritualistic journals. I send you two copies, in both you will find marked with red pencil flattering notices about my father's best daughter. Prince Wittgenstein is an old friend of my youth, but has become a re-incarnationist. We had a fight or two and parted half friends and

half enemies. He is the one that feels *sure* that the London Katy King was in a previous life his wife when he was some Turkish sultan or other. There's the fruit of the re-incarnational teaching.

As soon as my noble profile and classic nose re-incarnate themselves in their previous normal state I shall have my portrait taken for you and Mrs. Andrews, but not in profile. By some mysterious and unfair decree of Providence my nose presents in that way the appearance of an upturned old slipper, a little the worse for wear. I met Dr. Child a few days ago at Lincoln Hall face to face. He did not look at all as if he saw the sunshine this once after a storm, but looked, on the contrary, when meeting my gaze, the very picture of a venomous mushroom after a heavy shower—and cleared out.

My best compliments to Mrs. Corson; and to you, my sincerest, deepest wishes for a genuine warm "sunshine" to thaw the icicles from every place of your inner self. With sincere esteem and regard,

Truly yours,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

LETTER No. 5

PHILADELPHIA,

May 20th, 1875.

PROFESSOR HIRAM CORSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

As you will learn in my letter addressed to Mrs. Corson, if you ever do see me you will never have the pleasure of admiring but one of my legs, I am afraid. Fate is fate, and the less we talk about it the better it may be.

I agree with you that any talk about such an abstruse subject as spiritualism can be a great deal better done in conversation than through letters. I will "try" and come to see you if it were only for that; for I know you could be in great need of spiritual truths, and the sooner you will get convinced of the simple facts the less you will have chances of pondering over this subject as well as over others that may preoccupy you as I often saw you do, rubbing slowly your hands in your meditative mood, in the meanwhile, and asking yourself thousands of questions, all of them unanswered. Is it so? Or is it but the vicious images sent forth by the emanations of my own perverse imagination? It's for you to agree, and for me to submit to your decision.

I have an article by Professor Wagner, Professor of Zoölogy, and a very eminent scientist, a friend of the late A. Humbolt. Wagner has been battling

and kicking and fighting for years against spiritualism. Now he has found out at last that he has been "kicking against the pricks," as they say, shows his sores to the public, and admitting in a very lengthy article the truth of the phenomena, begs his brother scientists of Europe and America not to make asses of themselves any longer but decide once for all and go and investigate spiritualism earnestly and very seriously. Alas! Alas! I am afraid his voice will be one in a wilderness here in this country. Too many Dr. Beards and Professor Anthonys for that in America. As soon as I feel better I will translate this article for the *Scientist*.

Now you must excuse even this bit of a letter, for I write it from the deep recess of my bed, which is far from being a bed of roses, suffering as I do. You may think me perhaps a cheat if you did not forget that I promised you my portrait and that you have to see it yet. But I am not to be blamed. I seldom allow my noble countenance to get immortalized in portraits. I have none, and passing through New York had some taken at a spirit photographers. There I am, represented on it looking like some elderly idiot staring disconsolately at a she spirit with a rooster crest on its head, making faces at me. Really, putting all vanity aside, how can I send you such an awful caricature? So I gave two of those libel pictures to two persons I do not care about; but neither you nor Mrs. Andrews, nor Mr. Sargent, or even Olcott got one, and have to wait.

I feel very faint, and therefore, begging you will excuse my blots and scratchings out, and the general unclean appearance of my poor epistle,

I hope you will still believe in the sincerity with which I sign myself,

Truly yours,

(signed) H. P. BLAVATSKY.

My constant address is P.O. Box 2828, Philadelphia.

LETTER No. 6

PHILADELPHIA,

PROF. H. CORSON. *Sunday.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Really it is very *very* kind of you to care so much about such a poor lame creature as I have become lately, and how gladly would I avail myself of the opportunity you offer me so amiably, were I able to do so at present! But, as I can hardly travel from my bed to the other end of the room without help, how can I travel by railway to Ithaca? and how can I risk to encumber you with such a sad, cross, limping, disagreeable thing as I feel myself to be at present? As soon as I feel better and able to walk, if it be on a crutch, I will come to Ithaca, and then we will *talk*. Just prepare me a little corner where I can safely surround myself with clouds of smoke and change the spot into a miniature valley at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius, without shocking too much poor Mrs. Corson, and I will soon appear in it like some weird monstrous *she*-goblin or spook, peeping out from this dense smoky atmosphere only to force you to follow me into realms and regions far more dense and foggy and impenetrable at first sight than the former. But with a sufficient stock of will-power and earnest desire to impart to others what I happen to know myself, and a good dose of introductory knowledge on your part, as you happen to study so seriously Howitt's Ennemoser and others, let us hope that this

mutual introreception will not be followed (as in some cases I experienced lately) by a violent commotion of conflicting, adverse elements, causing a wide breach to form between the interlocutors for want of calm reasoning or too much fanaticism on either side.

Yes, I wrote to Mr. Sargent, and blamed him for having allowed the *Scientist* to go on with his idiotical *Diogenes* whom Brown has certainly fished out from some wash-tub in Boston. Of course, I excuse the poor man in one sense (Brown, not Diogenes, who is no man, but an ass), for he had to fill up his paper *quand même*, and perhaps was driven by necessity to ornament it with such impudent and occasionally *indecent* stuff. But previously to that, I had blown up Mr. Brown himself, and told him what I thought of him and his *Diogenes*. He will not publish it any more, I bet you. So you can contribute something to it occasionally, and receive for it the thanks of spiritualists in general and mine in particular. You are right, and the wickedest traitors are mostly to be found in one's own family. Such is the wolf-like propensity of human nature. I do not know Brown personally, nor do I care much for such an honour, but I *do* think him more foolish and young and inexperienced than conceited or stupid. He seems perfectly willing to take any advice, and has never accepted it from me or Mr. Sargent, but with real gratitude and readiness to submit most humbly to our *sine qua nons* and decrees. So don't be too hard on him. Poor Mr. Owen, between the cruel Truth staring him in the face, his long friendship for the Judas-Child and his own spiritual *fluctuations*, he is sadly situated. the dear old patriarch. I do not

think him fair in what he wrote so far as he consented to write anything at all, and *vis-à-vis* Olcott ; but he speaks truly and sincerely when he says that he better abstain from giving his opinions about the Holmeses, who *are* mediums, and for all that frauds ; and so they are. I will explain to you many things when I see you (if I ever do). Now look at poor General Lippitt and his efforts to save them from starvation and want ! Why, he does not know, of course, what all of us know in Philadelphia, namely, that Mrs. Holmes's appeal to spiritualists was chiefly made for the purchase of a buggy and horse. *They just bought one*, and paid between one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars for this apparel of luxury. What people who are in real want will ever think of buying horses and buggies ? Now, this is mere imposition, and I call it robbing the really needy ones from their last piece of bread to satisfy cheating, wicked, lying impostors ! Do not write this to Mrs. Andrews, she will *never* believe it, any more than she believes about Slade ; but if you want to ascertain the fact, have someone ask Mr. John Morton, a Philadelphia gentleman of high standing, president of the Market Street railroad, to whom Mrs. Holmes applied for this same horse. I never give to the world anything but *true facts*, and I will never allow myself to throw discredit on anyone, not even on Child that I despise and loathe, unless I am *perfectly sure* of the fact.

Child never answered my last letter. He never attempted to by printed word or a spoken one, except once, the day I had two hundred copies of my article distributed by my order on a Sunday at Lincoln Spirit'l Hall : the agent by an act of

LETTER No. 7

PHILADELPHIA,

DR. HIRAM CORSON. *Tuesday Night.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I am doubly fortunate in receiving letters from both yourself and Madame, but time admits my acknowledging only your own to-night. To-morrow I will answer Mrs. Corson.

Your criticism upon the literary aspirations of callow youth is generally correct, but I am persuaded does not apply to the case in point. Epes Sargent has called upon Mr. Brown by my request and makes a favourable report as to his industry and worthiness. His paper is selected for assistance because it is already established, is on a very economical basis, has a clean record, and presents itself to us as a *tabula rasa*. By degrees the favour of such men as yourself, Epes Sargent, Gen. Lippitt, Col. Olcott, and others I might name, is being enlisted, and it is my desire that at a time not distant, the survival of the paper being assured, a list of these eminent writers will be announced as thereafter contributing exclusively to its columns. My idea is, by no means to depend on Mr. G. Brown alone for the direction of our campaign; however, more of this anon. I thank you in advance for your hearty and kind promise of valuable help. I have so much confidence in the future that I have sent Mr. G. Brown

to-day fifty dollars scraped off the bottom of an empty purse, and only regret my present inability to do more at a moment when he requires at least two hundred and fifty dollars to tide him over deep waters. He wrote me a desperate letter, and I have put the matter in the hands of Mr. Epes Sargent, who will go to him immediately on receipt of my message, and handing him the sum, ascertain what more can be done or ought to be done for the paper.

Do not undervalue the importance of spiritual phenomena; instead of regarding them as the letter "which kills" you should consider them as constituting the broad deep foundations upon which alone intelligent belief in man's immortality can be safely reared. They heralded the birth of the Christian religion, clustered about its infancy, comforted, consoled, and armed its patristic propagandists; and the decadence of the Church dates from the time when they were ignored entirely by one branch and misdirected by the other. If you will simply say that the phenomena of the past twenty-seven years have mainly served to startle, amuse, or terrify the public I will not contradict you; but, in beginning our work of expounding the laws by which they are produced, and inculcating the moral principles they suggest, our purpose would be fatally defeated, for we should soon come into the present extremity of the denominational Churches, and propound dogmas unsupported by vital proofs. He who attains to the sublime heights of Wisdom and Intuition no more requires the buoyant support of these phenomena than does the eaglet need to rest on its mother's back after his pinions are fairly spread;

but the eagles of mind are few, and the twittering sparrows multitudinous, and it is not for those who can mount above the clouds of doubt to despise the needs of their weaker fellows. The mighty supernal intelligences who are directing this spiritual movement, so far from sharing in your view of the manifestations, have already begun to produce phenomena of a still higher order such as transfigurations (*n'en déplaise* Professor Anthony), direct writings, the photographing of the wandering soul of living persons, and the evocation of the latter (in spirit) while their individual bodies are asleep. The occurrence of these marvels was foretold to me and by me to others long before their advent; and if you will attentively watch the English, French, and American papers during the next three months you will see more and more cause for astonishment. I do not need to go to the Franklin Library or search in the annals of Baronius, Gibbon, or other authors for the facts about the "Labarum." If it interests you I can tell you all about it without ever reading one single one of those books, for in the records to which I have had access I find that this sign was known before Constantine's birth, that it was flashed in the sky obediently to a purpose long before entertained, to furnish a sign and a convenient symbol to arouse the enthusiasm and stimulate fervour of the hosts to whom the execution of a great design was committed. The books extant have only served to mislead men whose minds were not prepared to receive the truth by reason of their extraordinary self-sufficiency and conceit. The indications are that we are about at the threshold of an epoch when a

thousand mysteries shall be revealed, and it depends at least in some degree upon such very feeble mortal agencies as your pen and mine and those of other zealous workers, how soon the world shall be enlightened.

Can you doubt what I meant by the language you quote from a former letter of mine? Has your observation of spiritualism been to such little purpose that you do not know that there are ways of talking to your departed ones, of seeing them, of feeling the clasp of their hands, the pressure of their lips, without going to paid mediums, whose moral depravity is so often the means of surrounding them with a fetid and polluted atmosphere, habitable only by lying, mischievous, and vicious spirits, such as will be Child's? If you would learn the Secret of Secrets by which the highest heavens can be brought within the easy reach of your soul's vision and grasp, you must go to those sources of knowledge which have been long closed except to the *initiate*. I cannot even name to you the Body which has these secrets in charge, much less impart to you any of those I have learned, unless I find your mind after long acquaintance in such a stable mood as to indicate its *receptivity*. I have watched you through your moods of seclusion, and can only say that if with such abstraction, light has not at least glimmered upon your soul, you are not now in a state that would warrant what you desire. Instead of thanking me you would doubt me "even though one should rise from the dead" to corroborate my statements. Oh, my dear sir, why should poor humanity doubt so bitterly and repulse the divine hands stretched

forth to every suffering mortal! Why is it that the more enlightened seems a man the more his brains become thickly inlaid with a double crust of conceit and vanity which gets so incrusted in the "seat of thought" that they actually shut out every glimpse of divine light, leaving him a voluntary victim to the illusions of his self-constituted gods, in the shape of precise ciphers, mathematical deductions, and so forth? Poor, poor humanity! Verily, said Christ, that pure spirit that will remain in the heart of every noble man or woman, the very ideal of perfection on this dirty earth, that "the kingdom of heaven will be taken away from the wise men and revealed unto babes" (if I quote erroneously forgive my ignorance of the precise words). If my poor explanation and still poorer knowledge can be of any use to you, why, I ask the question about what you call "the monogram of Christ," the ☧—the question came after I had read your description of the suffering, the patience in illness, and moral fortitude of that poor child that was your daughter on this earth, and is now your daughter a thousand times more so in the land of light and love. You seem to feel the loss (!?) so bitterly, your agony appeared so intense to me that I asked myself with surprise (that will be justified in the hereafter even in your eyes) how it came to pass that you, who have selected the mysterious symbol of ☧ for your seal, not only use black sealing wax for it (the black, emblem of darkness and irretrievable loss) but actually used in one breath,—if I am permitted this expression—the expression of your sorrow and the exhibition of the symbol of the whole. I saw at

once that you did not fully realize its secret meaning, that standing before an open door, that you had but to touch with your finger if you wanted "to behold the one that stood behind it"; you lamented, believing the door shut, if not for ever,—locked at least for the time of your earthly life, and that perhaps you did not even know that you stood at the very open door. I employed a little diplomatic subterfuge—pardon me, for I was afraid of becoming guilty of an indiscretion, and put you the question about the symbol in another shape, expecting to understand from your answer how far you knew its meaning and *properties*. I now see all. You are acquainted with the "Labarum" only as many others are. You take it to be a monogram of Christ, for the books you allude to, never thought (or perhaps did not know themselves) that, because the shape of the ☧ happened to resemble the Greek letters of Χ and Ρ., it was not proof at all that the "Labarum" had been formed of the letters belonging to the Greek alphabet. Why should not the Greek alphabet be as likely composed partially of the most ancient symbols and signs? Such is the case I assure you. I defy all the scientists of the world, as well as all the antiquaries, philologists, and all the *Champollions*, Senior and Junior, to prove to me that this symbol of ☧ does not exist as far back as 16,000 years previous to the birth of Christ. You can trace it from our modern cathedrals down to the Temple of Solomon, to the Egyptian Karnac, 1600 B.C. The Thebans find it in the oldest Coptic records of symbols preserved on tablets of stone and recognize it, varying its multitudinous forms with every epoch,

every people, creed or worship. It is a Rosicrucian symbol, one of the most ancient and the most mysterious. As the Egyptian *Crux ansata*, ☥ or ☥ that travelled from India, where it was considered as belonging to the Indian symbolism of the most early ages, its lines and curves could be suited to answer the purpose of many symbols in every age and fitted for every worship. But the *real* genuine meaning very few know, and when they do *know* they are afraid to use it through moral cowardice and stubborn doubt. The *Crux ansata* meant "the time that was to come," the "Labarum" when it went under another *alias* meant "the time *is* come." As God looks down upon the passing ages and remains for ever the same unchangeable A and Ω, the Alpha and Omega; so it is with this symbol and powerful sign. You may alter its shape and adopt its form to suit any period or fancy, call it whatever name you like, it will, notwithstanding all its metamorphoses, remain the same, with the identical power it possesses, and will always help the *initiated* to unlock as a genuine *key* the door of the "Mystery of Mysteries." Its origin belongs to the greatest of *light suns* in history; for it is born from the central "intolerable ring of brilliancy," to quote the words of Flamel,—the original gods' revelation. It retains its power up to our days, belongs to the oldest of religions, or *knowledge*, I should rather say, and is ever ready to usher us through its potency into the presence of our beloved, living in a brighter world. Even the famous "Sesame, ouvres toi" refers to the "Labarum"; "*omnia ex uno, omnia in uno, omnia ad unum, omnia per medium, et omnia in omnibus*" is a Hermetic

axiom and can be applied to the so-called "Labarum." The two lines of / and \ or X do not represent the Greek letter (the Russian or Slavonian tau) X or guttural *ch*. In the Rosicrucian teaching both of these lines united or separated have special magic or spiritual powers according to where they stand to the supernatural extra forces that help them through the operations of those "who know how and when to direct the weird power," says Robertus de Fluctibus, the great English Rosicrucian or alchemist, in his learned work called "Examen in qua Principia philosophiae Roberti Fluddi, Medici." I wish you could read it. He would teach you all you may expect to know.

Forgive me my long letter.

Truly yours with the greatest esteem,

(signed) H. P. BLAVATSKY.

3420 Samson St.,
West Philadelphia.

My dear Sir, please note the letters I write you at *night-time*, and put more faith in them than in those scribbled in daylight. I will explain when I have the honour and pleasure of seeing you personally.

LETTER No. 8

PROFESSOR H. CORSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

Truly spirits do bring on sometimes wonderful things! Hardly had I mailed you a letter, three times too long perhaps for an ordinary man's patience, when your own last favour proved to be a real god-send: first, for a poor worthy fellow, and then, if spirits help me, it may prove to be the little first cause of great results. You never thought, I am sure, when writing as you did in your last and giving vent to an honest indignation that ought to be felt and shared by every spiritualist, about the disgusting publication of "Duff Mr. Duff" in the Irreligio—Unphilosophical, as it ought to be called,—that your indignation, catching hold of me, would make me lay awake all night; and when I lay awake I think, and after thinking I generally act. The same morning brought me back my article from Colby which without further comment he respectfully declined on a bit of a dirty printed slip of paper. Very well; so I began thinking and plotting and scheming, and took the *Spiritual Scientist*, to which little paper I had never paid much attention before; and finding there another mention of my name from the *Revue Spirite*, I sent it to you. Did you receive it? (not the *Revue* but the *Scientist*). I took up some back

numbers and read them through attentively, and the more I read the less I found of such trash as I found on the *Religio*, and even in the great sublime *Banner*. On the contrary, I remarked in it a decided tendency, as I wrote you, to help our cause, and an earnest endeavour to follow the steps of *The London Spiritualist*, and other such respectable foreign papers. Are you of my opinion? To be sure it is rather difficult for you to judge from two single copies; but I like it so well myself that I subscribed for it immediately. Then came in a gentleman from Boston to visit me, and I learned from him that the editor of *The Scientist* was a very well-educated young man, well-connected enough but poor as poverty itself. To become a spiritualist and an editor of a spiritual paper he had quarrelled with all his family, and the consequences were that he had quite ruined himself. The opposition on the part of the *Banner*,—whose policy is to praise and puff up all spiritual manifestations, even fraudulent and spurious ones, and never to expose anything or anyone,—was untiring. Their persecution of this poor Jerry Brown, who took from the first quite a contrary course, was merciless. That's what I learned from Mr. Giles of Boston. Of course, I felt fired up like a dry match immediately, got several subscribers for him the same day, and sent him my article, adding in my letter that I begged him not to look upon the subscription money in the light of a bribe, for, if he were not to print my article at all or thought it too long for the *Scientist*, I should try to find him subscribers just the same. Then I received a letter from Olcott talking with me at length about the

immediate necessity of having in this country a respectable spiritualistic paper, and that I must try and work for it if I have the cause at heart. So I went and talked to my friends and acquaintances, and the idea struck me that if we could secure the *Scientist* for this class of spiritualist, which I can name at once the opposition party, we might do a vast deal of good for the cause. We have got no antidote as yet. The poisonous stuff is served out in the shape of all manner of bogus communications. The spiritualists are more and more bewildered, benumbed, and paralyzed though believing all the time *sur parole* only because the *Banner* or the dear old *Religio-Philosophical* said so and endorses it. Such a state of mind is more than dangerous and requires an antidote. My idea is to raise a subscription from the richer spiritualists and issue stock at one hundred dollars a share.

An editor, an able one at least, would be very difficult to select, for if he answered well enough one way he might fail in something else. Colonel Olcott is ready enough, but then he asks right away seven hundred dollars a month, and I find the nut too hard to crack for a fervent spiritualist. Would not you think that if we tried to help that poor Jerry Brown, something good might come of it ? If we only help him by inducing prominent spiritualists and prominent well known men to write for his paper occasionally, help him in the way of finding subscribers (as the *Banner* acts so mean towards him), don't you think we could help the cause and at the same time help a poor struggling fellow-creature, a brother spiritualist ? I am not, generally speaking, very tender-hearted,

but my heart aches for that man after the letter I received this morning from him, which I forward to you for perusal. Don't you think his very soul speaks in this simple truthful narrative of his trials and sufferings? I know he does not tell half of his troubles; his position is worse even than what he admits to me. He might get as a printer, a compositor, or type-setter thirty-five dollars a week,—and still he clings to the truth and struggles and works like a slave to get but half this amount, with a regular weekly deficit that slowly but surely drags him into the abyss! Isn't it meritorious in him? I do respect and honour him for that and will do everything in my power to help him through. If you could only write something serious for his paper, something that would attract attention, and your name alone would be sufficient to raise up his paper. And then, perhaps, you might find him a few subscribers in Ithaca. If you cannot, which I am afraid is the case, for I know more than you think about you, then do write something for his paper. See how freely and unceremoniously I act; that's the usual effect of too much kindness. But I know you are a good, kind, noble heart, and will not think me daring or indiscreet to claim such a service from you; you are a spiritualist and a true one. When you have read Jerry Brown's letter in response to my second one in which I asked him to tell me what I could do for him, and if a subscription would be of any good to him,—please send it to Mrs. Louisa Andrews. I know she will cry over it, that she will, and her "Buff" will howl with sympathy, for dogs are in our days more honest and noble-

hearted than men are, and more truthful than spiritualists of the class of Colby. Fancy Rich, the proprietor of the *Banner*, in partnership with a low variety theatre. Spiritualism and variety show! O Nineteenth Century! what a pretty fellow you are!

I will write to Flammarion, the astronomer, of Paris, and ask him to write something; and then I will get Mrs. Andrews. Do you think if Longfellow would write a piece of poetry for him it would do him any good? With all this I forgot my article. It will appear in the next number of the *Scientist*, and I am going to take several hundred copies and send them all over the country. I guess Child's "sunshine" will be eclipsed for a few days.

Excuse my "*style échevelé*" and innumerable mistakes, but no one can reasonably expect a woman with her nerves all stretched and like strings in an old fiddle ready to burst, to write good English. I feel so excited that I wonder I didn't write my letter in Russian. I enclose a very curious letter from a prisoner, published by the *Hartford Times*, and sent me by Colonel Olcott. Perhaps it will make you smile. Please present my sincere compliments to Mrs. Corson, and keep on believing me, most truly and respectfully yours,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

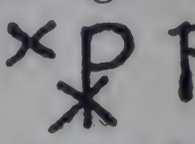
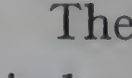
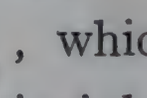
Thursday.

Could you not bring out our statements against Child in the *Scientist* and confound Colby?

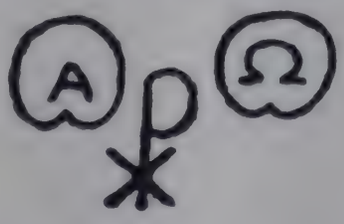
P.S. No date.

Will you kindly allow me, dear Sir, one more

question. If my inquisitiveness is rude or unwelcome don't answer me, and I will understand and feel the eloquent hint. I wanted to ask you the question from the first, but did not feel I had the right to.

Why, instead of the original sign of the "Labarum" which stands thus  , and is the one which is said to have appeared to the Emperor Constantine in the heavens one fine morning, you have adopted a change on each side of the "Labarum,"  ? The latter characters, as far as I know (and I judge in my own Rosicrucian way by the second table of stone in the Double Lithoi) mean—  , which was given or delivered by (male principle) and —because it passed or came *through*—(THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE RIGHT AND LEFT). But then on your seal is lacking both on and the surrounding signs of .

It ought to stand, if I understand right, thus:



Can you tell me why?

Well, perhaps I am a fool after all, and an inquisitive one, too, and you are right and know better.

God bless you and forgive my indiscretion, if it is one.

Yours truly again,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

LETTER No. 9

PHILADELPHIA,

PROFESSOR HIRAM CORSON. *Monday.*

DEAR SIR,

Having received your letter on Friday evening I postponed answering it, wishing first to ascertain if my article be printed in the last *Banner*. I knew it would not, and my prevision turned out to be true. Henceforth, if I do not promptly act I will have to follow the example of Bluebeard's wife with her "*Seur Anne, ne vois tu rien venir?*" It's useless, Colby will *not* publish it, for some causes as unfathomable as spiritualism itself in certain minds. If it would not be giving you too much trouble I would beg of you to let Colby know that you have read a copy of my article, as I tell him that I have sent it all over the country to all of my acquaintances and correspondents. I am determined to see it published, whatever the cost may be. I write to Mrs. Andrews to-day asking her to try if she cannot manage to get it in the *Springfield Republican*. If she succeeds—so much the better for truth and the worse for Colby's partiality. Have you read in the Boston *Spiritual Scientist* an extract from the *London Spiritualist?* Even in London they know that out of the eleven spiritualists claiming to exist in this country, I, a foreigner, a

woman, am the only one to fight the truth. They are very complimentary to me, but Colby will take care not to quote from it in his paper.

Mrs. Andrews has sent me a beautiful portrait of yours, and I am very much obliged to her. I did not dare trouble you for it, being such an utter stranger to you. I do take her to be one of the brightest, purest spirits ever created in this dirty swamp called Earth. She seems to be incarnated kindness and gentleness, so sincere, so truthful, so ever ready to forgive and be unwilling to believe in evil; no wonder she can never feel happy *here*. I am next to afraid of corresponding too much with her lest I should inadvertently show her a glimpse of the "horns and hoofed heel" of my real true nature, for I cannot and will not forgive as long as I can help it. I have taken to task to scourge and whip vice wherever I find it, and in myself more than in others. You will surely blame me for it as many others did, but I cannot help it. I sooner will forgive murder, or worse than that, theft, than a lie; and Dr. Child is a biped lie, as you know it yourself. I have promised myself and proclaimed to the world my indomitable resolution to take this Philadelphia hydra with his seven lying-heads by the teeth and claws, and not to relinquish my hold until I strangle it fairly on the spot, though I may be bitten and wounded by it. Lies and untruthfulness or cheating must be considered the greatest crimes in our sacred cause, for they are the more dangerous in a belief that allows so much margin for deception and self-illusion, and ought to be persecuted above everything else. What the "pious frauds" of the "Fathers" of

the Church in the early days of Christianity, combined with the deliberate cheating of the Catholic priesthood, have brought to poor deluded humanity (or at least a portion of it) must be avoided for spiritualism in the future ages. Humanity as a mass is worse than ever now, having sinned through ignorance and frailty of our imperfect nature. Now they sin, the so-called civilization, and knowing perfectly what they are about. The prevailing miserable tendency toward materialism in our age, brought about by the never-ending exposures by science of all manner of religious frauds, can be cured by *Truth* alone, and only by it, for humanity in general is certainly too much advanced to accept one lie for another. On the whole, confessing to ourselves how things stand just now, we spiritualists certainly cannot wonder at the reluctance of the majority of people to barter that erroneous belief which, notwithstanding its numerous fabricated dogmas, has still won its right to citizenship and respectability through ages, for another one, that is seemingly fabricated under the very eyes of the growing generations. How very careful must we be, then, in accepting phenomena and revelations purporting to come from spirits. What dreadful consequences can bring about one deliberate lie, found out beyond doubt in the mouth of a spiritualist! Like one drop of gall in a bucketful of pure water, it is ever liable to poison the whole truth. I know that what I undertake is perhaps beyond my powers, but never beyond *my will*; for like a *sentinelle perdue* I will die at my post firm and unflinching, trying to set all facts in their true light. Those that seek to overturn the

truth of spiritualism will find a curious dragon in me and a merciless exposer, whoever they may be. I see the arduousness and barrenness of the journey lying before me, the impassable thorns my path is covered with, but I do not fear or feel discouraged. I have received anonymous letters, threatening messages, and insulting warnings, but only feel like laughing at them. My reward is not here, and I do not expect it here; it's at home upstairs, and I know well, that were I to fail or succeed, in either case I shall be laughed at, defamed, slandered, and blackmailed; and even should events subsequently vindicate fully the whys and wherefors of my mode of proceeding, I feel that not one dog of the vilifiers of our cause and scoffers of myself will sway his tongue to acknowledge that at least one of the fanatics, crazy believers in spiritualism, has been truthful in every way. But what I do feel sometimes sorely, is that I am but a woman, after all, and that all the moral courage and physical, too, I guess, cannot carry me through if someone does not help me and back me, an individual of my poor weak sex. Will you be one of your strong sex to help me in the truth? When I look at your portrait, though I see you but in profile, it seems to me that you are one that accomplishes more than he promises and acts more than he speaks. Most probably you will never see me, and that's lucky, for my shocking Russian manners would terrify you, but will you allow me to write you and ask your help for the forthcoming fight between truth and blind fanaticism in spiritualism? I have secured the help of Colonel Olcott, General Lippitt, of Dr. Taylor, in the West,

Aksakof in Petersburg, and a dozen others. Spiritualism as it is must be stopped in its progress and given another direction. The delusions and insane theories of some spiritualists are shameful in our century. I have some rich friends here in Philadelphia, and the female portion of them are all ready to come out with their money and influence on behalf of the cause. So what we need the most is brains and fearless indomitable minds to work up in the mental department at our command, we have but very very few scholars. Do not be frightened, dear sir, for I will never take advantage of your kind permission if you give it, and become a bore. What I ask you is to simply contribute a few times a year some article like the one you sent in to the *Banner*, your last letter I mean, and let Colby and his like know that there is behind the screens a small party of spiritualists who are after truth alone, and will never allow a lie or an exaggerated fact to spread abroad without trying to rectify it. They will never allow him, the truthful Colby, to withhold truth and help falsehood.

Well, I think that, notwithstanding my fine promises for the future, I did become a bore in my present letter, which is undoubtedly too long for any mortal's patience, so please accept my sincere thanks and excuses, and . . . (the subscription only cut off).

LETTER No. 10

PHILADELPHIA,

Wednesday.

PROFESSOR H. CORSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

How can I ever thank you for your kind remembrance and friendly wishes to me? Really and indeed, this fearful sickness has opened my blind eyes and perhaps cured me of my unjust and bitter suspicions towards many of my friends. I never believed in the possibility for myself to find any other but indifferent acquaintances and correspondents. I have found out my mistake with some and will profit by it.

The danger is far—*unfortunately;* but at least I will not be obliged to add to the list of my natural accomplishments and charms, the one of a wooden leg, once that I am doomed to live.

I am really glad and proud to see that you are able to discern in my face something else beside a pug nose. It rekindles my hopes for a future time to come when we shall be sitting both of us smoking and talking, and I expect that having been able to find out something behind the veil of flesh on the portrait, you may perhaps find out, too, behind or rather inside that clumsy Russian form of mine, something worthy of your attention. You know I am a missionary, and a fanatic, too, by the way. You must believe in

something else besides your "Ennemosers and Howitts." Magnetism is all very fine and a very appropriate word sometimes, but it does not cover all the ground, and there is most assuredly something yet at the back of it which Ennemoser failed to perceive; for nothing blinds so much your intuitions and perceptions and prevents you from hearing the whisperings of your spirit as too much study and ponderings over books. "The dead letter that killeth." Read more on the pages of your soul if you can, and leave the idle speculations of others—outwardly scientific as they may appear—to the stony Tyndalls and the sceptical book-worms who live and die in other people's authorities, though in their pride they may fancy them their own.

I am afraid my scribbling will be a sad strain on your nerves. Excuse me and believe in the sincere and true feelings of your

Very grateful

H. P. Blavatsky.

LETTER No. 11

PHILADELPHIA.

PROF. HIRAM CORSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

Just sent you a letter yesterday, for I felt better, and for this last reason did not like sending you such a horrid portrait.

But to-day I feel *worse*, and, as I want you to recognize me whenever I peep out from "under the veil of Isis," to come down and have a bit of friendly chat with you, I send you this one. Don't get too scared, and try to keep away the nightmare from you. *They want me to part with my leg to-morrow.* "Barkis is willing." I will do to-night what I would not have done a month ago to save my life (had it been dear to me, which *it is not*) and ask those I dread and fear, but who alone can save it from amputation, to come and help me, for I am afraid I am so strong that I may survive this horrid leg, and above all I dread such a prospect.

I would have sent another picture of mine to Mrs. Corson, but this is the last I have, except one that I am sending to Mrs. Andrews.

Good-bye, and God bless you, my dear unknown correspondents.

I will come.

Yours truly here and there,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

LETTER No. 12

No date.
Evidently from New York after Mme. Blavatsky's visit to Ithaca.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,

Lord love you, my best friend, is your wife's sister's niece's child dead, or what? that neither yourself nor your dear *épouse* can write a line to a poor she-traveller? This is the third letter I write you and not a word in response. Are you angry? Are you mad with me for anything? Think not, for I feel as innocent of any wrong done to you as an unborn kitten.

The boots are here, but I would prefer a letter.

I am nailed up like a slave to my chair writing all day as I did in your place. I have found some very precious rare books at Mr. Ditson's, like B. Higgins's *Anacalypsis*,[1] for instance, and it is very useful to me. And what do you do, and pussy and the apple-trees? I feel as if I had left a home where I had lived for twenty years, God bless you! Is my dear Mrs. Corson translating hard? 'Pon my word, I feel as if all was not right, as if she was kind of angry with me for something. Olcott wants me to go home (?!!)

[1] The author is Godfrey Higgins, 1771 to 1833. Among his works is cited: *Anacălypsis; an attempt to draw aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis, or An Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations, and Religions*, 1836, 2 vols., quarto, Posth. Privat ly printed.

and does not even say where is this home. I like his impudence.

I send you *The World*, with an interesting letter in it addressed to Olcott, from *un temoin oculaire*. I will send you hereafter all the interesting things that might chance to come out, and the by-laws of our Society.

Did you read the true pro and con in the last *Banner?* Brittain versus Britten, one stating that she had seen herself the elementary, and the other denying that ever such a thing existed at all.

Well, we have lit a "goodly" bonfire, as John says it, and I guess we shall have to fight our way out pretty hard this winter for our spiritual heresy.

Do tell me, please, in a letter the words you told me about the Koran. "Every word of it is true," isn't it? I forgot them and want really with my usual impudence to place them at the beginning.

I enclose fifty cents for Mary. I forgot to pay her for her last washing and she must think me mean.

God bless both of you. Do let me hear if it were but one word in answer. When will Beardsley send me the rest of my portraits? Please order from him two dozen more of those with the cigarette in the hand, only bigger if he can do them. I will enclose you a post office order for eight-fifty in my next if you answer me that he is at work on them. I suppose by the thirteen dollars he, too, charged me for the three dozen, that every extra dozen will be four twenty-five. Will you inquire, please?

God re-bless you.

Sincerely and truly yours,

H. P. Blavatsky.

LETTER No. 13

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
MOTT MEMORIAL HALL,
64 MADISON AVENUE,
NEW YORK,
Jan. 8th, 1876.

Happy New Year to both of you!

MY DEAR MR. CORSON,

Et tu, Brute! Well, you have given me a nice blow and a very unexpected one. You have obliged me to read over and over Olcott's Inaugural Address, and confess that you are partially right. I never read it before, and when he delivered it I was so preoccupied with my own thoughts that I only heard the spirit of it and not the dead letter. But, my dear, dear Mr. Corson, believe me that greatly as I value your opinion, and much as I know you to be unable of premeditated or conscious injustice, you have been too hard and too unjust to him, for on my soul, he is the most fervent, the most unselfish and fanatical spiritualist that ever was.

What is there in his unfortunate English phraseology which makes him, an able writer, shape his words so as to be misunderstood by two-thirds of his opponents? My knowledge of the English is so superficial that most likely I do

not well understand the value of words. But I am ready to stake my life that Olcott neither wanted to insult spiritualists nor mean what you think; never was his indignation so great as when he learned about the insult offered us by Tyndall; it was greater than mine perhaps. Do you not agree with him in deploring that state of things in American spiritualism? You are not a free lover; hundreds of well-educated men and women are not free lovers; thousands of them *are*. I can tell you one thing, Mr. Corson, and I swear it to you *on my eternal soul*, that Olcott, who was himself not of a very virtuous life as most men are in New York, and committed licentious actions before, since he became a spiritualist,—for he is a spiritualist,—has begun to lead the most ascetic life. Mr. Corson, I write this to you as to a gentleman if not as to a friend, for now that you are mad with theosophists perhaps you do not wish to have me as a friend,—therefore I write you this in strict confidence, and if you do not believe *me* write to your old friend Monachesi, who is a member of our Society, and he will corroborate my words. Olcott is a fanatic, so much so, that I am afraid that this abrupt change from a comfortable life, good eating and drinking and indulging in all sorts of worldly things, will either bring him to insanity or death. He is getting thinner with every day. He eats no more meat, renounces supper and wine; his only aim in life is to become purified, as he says, of his past life, of the stains he has inflicted on his soul. I can do nothing with him. I have evoked the spirit of fanaticism in him, and now I cruelly repent, for this man does

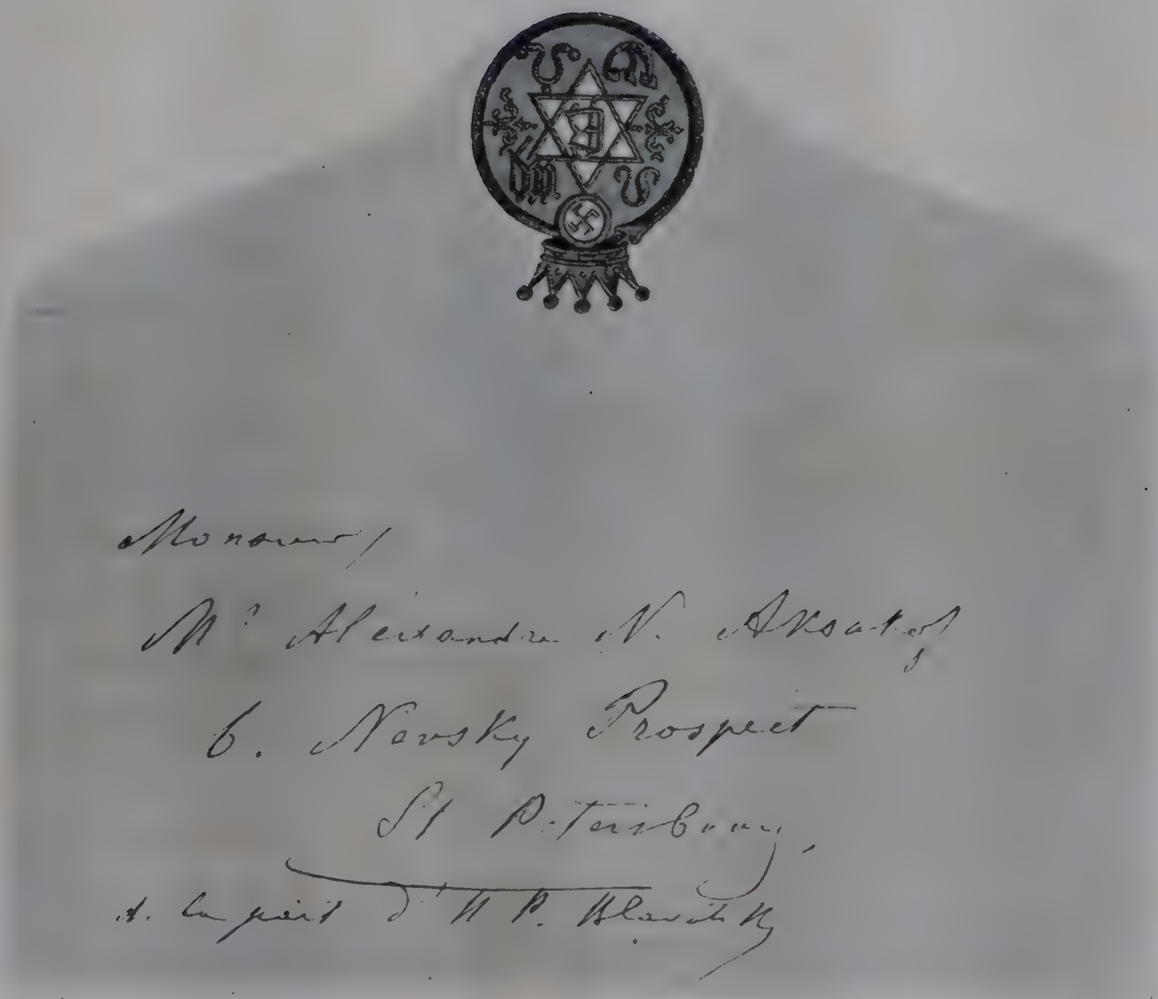
nothing by halves. His only object in life, he says, is to purify American spiritualism of the dirt of free love ; to never proceed to hold séances except by making the greatest efforts to secure pure mediums of pure morality, children or young innocent persons, if possible, such selected priestesses vowed to chastity as in the times of Theurgy. He is right there, for if we wish to commune with pure spirits we must open to them clean passages, and offer pure channels. You have Mary Andrews, a good, honest, virtuous woman, a mother of a family ; but how many have you of such ? Think of the New York mediums. Ask people what they are and how can you expect to have any other spirits but unprogressed vile criminals like the murderer Webster, or elementaries through those who are so impure. See Home, the best of all physical mediums in Europe ; why, he is positively obsessed by the Seven Devils. No slander, no defamation, no lie is too much for him. Because Olcott views spiritualism perhaps too exultingly, and expresses himself in too strong terms,—for I agree with you in that—why should people misunderstand him for that which never entered his mind ? Many and many times, day after day, I repeat to him that he must not brag of what is not done yet. For Felt, though he promised to all the Theosophists to clear the atmosphere chemically and show the unseen monsters around us, and though he had done so before a dozen witnesses at least, who traduced him and called him a sorcerer, I do not know whether or when he will make his promise good. But Olcott is such a sanguine fanatic, so sure of the other world, so

certain that if he leads a pure life he will be helped by genuine spirits, pure disembodied men and women, that he speaks of it very foolishly as if it were already demonstrated and done.

My dear Mr. Corson, will you doubt me being a spiritualist? You know my ideas; I have shown you fully what I am and what I think. I told you that I did not think myself good and pure enough to evoke spirits, that I am so wicked that I cannot even control John, and I have given him up. The last evening I passed with you, Mrs. Corson gave me a lesson which I will never forget in my life, and the mother, in whom the most sacred feelings were so aroused to indignation by the mere idea of seeing her departed angel mixed up with ex-pirates and unprogressed spirits, —was right; and since that night she is constantly before my eyes whenever I am about to fall to the temptation and allow John to speak to some distressed mother, father, brother, or some other person who holds the spirit he wants to communicate with as sacred. Forgive my stupid English and do try to understand me if you can. Perhaps I shall never see you again, but the warm sincere friendship, the high respect and esteem I feel for both Mrs. Corson and yourself will never change. You may reject me as unworthy of you; you may perhaps believe all the calumnies circulated about me; you may become my enemy, but I shall not change for all that.

My book is finished, and it is there you will find all I think. It is no more like what it was when I was writing it in your home, than one chapter is like twenty or thirty others. I take every phenomenon, every manifestation, and try

to show Science that not only is it possible but that it is so and must be so in the very nature of things. I sent the introductory chapter to Buchanan, and he calls it "grand, gloomy, and peculiar," but suggests few changes. I shall send him chapter after chapter, for I have no one in the world to help and show me where I am wrong and where right, and I shall feel grateful to any scientist, or unprejudiced spiritualist who will help me. At least I am a spiritualist, and bitter as my last letter in the *Scientist* is, you can see by it that I am a true spiritualist. Papers slander me, mediums defame me, and spiritualists misunderstand me. What can I do? There is no one in this wide world but hates me, I that have never harmed any one knowingly. Well, such is my fate. All the slanders afloat about me in London and here come from Dr. Child and Catholic priests (two of them here). See what Algernon Joy writes about Child in the London *Spiritualist*. Notwithstanding that everyone knows in the country that the Holmeses and he were frauds, he continues selling in Philadelphia his biography of John King, dictated by the mask shown by the Holmeses; and Child is an honorary member of the London *Spiritualist*. He is one of the most prominent writers and supporters of the *Religio-Philosophical* journal, he a proved fraud, a mercenary humbug. There's your justice in your spiritualist papers. He makes money by his spiritualist frauds and is honoured. I give my last cent to the cause and leave myself no means to buy shoes with, and I am slandered and vilified as if I were "The Mother of Harlots" in person. Did I invent elementaries? Are they Olcott's



THE ENVELOPE CONTAINING A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO ALEXANDER N. AKSAKOF, IMPERIAL RUSSIAN CHANCELLOR, AT ST. PETERSBURG, INTRODUCING MRS. CORSON.

The emblem is in red and gold in the original.

and my creation? Such was the firmest belief of the Theurgists and mediæval scientists. Aksakof writes me that Prince Dolgourouky, the greatest mesmeriser now living except Dupotet, says, after thirty years' experience with clairvoyants, that they draw a large line of demarcation between disembodied genuine spirits and elementaries. That they see and describe them, and assure him, without knowing one word of occultism, that at séances the gnomes and sylphs generally prevail if the medium is not pure. They describe these beings just as Paracelsus and others describe them; ignorant clairvoyants, most of them illiterate peasant girls, have also described them.

Charles Massey, our English member, writes from England to Olcott that he dined with Crookes and passed half a day in deep conversation with him, and that Crookes confessed to him he was an occultist, a pupil of Eliphas Levi; that Crookes showed and explained to him many things, giving him as his reason of his unbelief in spiritualism, his firm knowledge that Katy King was an elementary spirit. Now, you see that the Magic half-explained by Eliphas Levy brings results, and places you in contact with elementaries only. Were Crookes an initiate of the East he would know how to drive away elementaries and commune but with immortal spirits. Such magic is sorcery and more than dangerous. White or sacred magic of the Theurgists is Spiritualism in its most *sublime pure state*. If we speak of elementaries it is not because we want to prove that all the spirits are such, but to warn people to discern between those and immortal spirits, because for us occultists, spiritualism is the

most sacred belief that can be given to humanity, and that we consider the communication between disembodied spirits and ourselves such a mysterious, sacred affair as not to contaminate it through such channels as most mediums are. Iamblichus, Porphyry, Plutarch, Appolonius, and all the Neo-Platonists wrote hundreds of volumes on the difference existing between bad demons or elementaries, and good demons or the souls of the departed. See what Iamblichus, a practised Theurgist, writes. He deems it so sacred that the least error, he says, the least impurity during the evocation, can bring elementaries in the shape of monstrous animals and so forth. The spiritualists of France never proceed to hold a séance without a fervent harmonious prayer, and they are right.

Well, I have said enough. Time will show who is right and who is wrong. I sent you two copies of the *Sun* of December 26th and January 2nd with my two articles. I have contracted with the *Sun* (or nearly done so) for an article every Sunday for thirty dollars; it helps me to live, and that is why my book goes so slowly, for one cannot well write with an empty stomach.

I have not seen Olcott since I read your article in the *Banner*. I am sure it will be a sad blow to him, for he thinks a great deal of you, and is untiring in his praises of esteem of you.

We have séances with every medium who consented to be tested. What we want is to kill fraud. We had three séances with Mary Thayer; they were the most beautiful. We were sixteen theosophists, all skeptics except Olcott and me, and seven editors of different papers. She was bagged,

and the séance was held at Mr. Newton's house. Mr. Newton is president of the New York spiritualists; no fraud possible, rooms searched, doors sealed and locked, our own pockets ransacked. In three minutes the enormous table was literally covered with flowers, the most rare plants, two ring-doves, a canary-bird, shells, pieces of wet coral from the sea, etc. etc. That is a test. God bless you and Mrs. Corson.

Truly and sincerely yours,

H. P. Blavatsky.

LETTER No. 14

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
MOTT MEMORIAL HALL,
64 MADISON AVENUE,
NEW YORK,
March 22, 1876.

MY DEAR MR. CORSON,

I need not tell you that your letter was a very agreeable surprise. It proved to me that the recent distrust in my judgment in consequence of the abuse that has been showered upon me from every nook and corner is not always warranted. I had come almost to believe that I was an impostor, because everybody said so. I could not blame you to be the echo of the great uproar of a thousand slanderous tongues. What little good opinion I had of myself was crushed out; and if they had accused me of having murdered President Lincoln or of being a reincarnation of Pope Joan, I would not have been surprised. But let us drop it. I never would have said a word if the story had not been told me in the presence of several of my friends, who expressed their indignation at this unmerited epithet. Your letter in the *Banner* made me think you had very hard feelings against occultists to speak of us as assassins who were going to murder all the spirits of mediums, instead of their being as they are their most devoted

friends. The difference between us is that the mediums sell spirits and their phenomena for money and the spiritualists buy them as they would sweet candy, while we occultists regard the subject as a religion which should not be profaned. Olcott blew a loud blast on the trumpet because *he knew* that Phelps' experiments would come right upon his heels, *and so they did*. Our Society is now pledged to secrecy, and we have a grip and a password.

Spiritualism is based upon *blind faith*, that is, the spiritualists cannot demonstrate the reality of their spirits while the faith of the occultists in God and the spirits is firmly based upon a mathematical demonstration of both. Therefore the former is built upon sand, but ours upon the firm rock. There can be no such undaunted believers as the Kabbalists are, for no amount of fraud, lying, or exposures, can shake a conviction based upon such a ground. With you all it is hypothesis; with us spiritualism is a geometrical theorem, solved and proved ages ago by philosophers who lived thousands of years before Pythagoras. With spiritualists, two plus two equals five and half a dozen in the bargain; but with us they can make nothing but four. We ask no spiritualists to believe what we say, because we say it, we ask them to investigate and see for themselves. If Plato's philosophy—called a dreamy fiction by the Epicureans of our modern days—is accused of being the opposite of Aristotle's; and if instead of proceeding like the latter from the particulars to the universals, we have but one unanswerable argument to offer, Geometry, the only exact science among the many others, the only one

which accepts *no hypothesis, no theories, no speculations*, but whose decisions are irrevocable—proceeds also from universals down to particulars. So that spiritualists who are so anxious to upset the Kabbalah as a science, must first prove Geometry and Euclid to be in error. Of course, the manner in which this idea should be forced upon the attention of spiritualists is far from being that which should have been employed by Olcott. But he is of a very combative disposition, and a crazy enthusiast, but his honesty no one can question. He kicked up a tremendous row on the two continents, and I received all the return blows, as I am generally considered in the light of the daimon of Socrates towards him. He did no good to spiritualism, but a serious harm to the cause he represents as the President of our Society. But now he knows better, as you may judge by his recent letters. This seems to be a very critical time for spiritualists, and for all of us who believe in genuine phenomena, and we can well afford to put aside minor differences to fight the common enemy. That unmitigated blackguard, Home, not content with spitting venom on everyone who is said to produce phenomena, has attacked the pure and innocent Leymarie, the dead Eliphas Levy, and all the mediums of Christendom. The editorial of Colby in last week's *Banner* will find echo all over Europe.

I understand and appreciate your fine Latin quotation from one of the hyper-critical Fathers of the early Church. You surely do not want me to be canonised at such a price? Think only, St. Blavatsky—impostor and martyr. Pretty epitaph

to be engraved on my tombstone! That would surely beat my wife's sister's niece's youngest child.

Well, God bless you. I am glad we have settled our quarrel. A thousand sincere regards to Mrs. Corson, which—unless she takes me really to be an anti-Christ in petticoats—she must accept as sincere.

Yours truly and sincerely,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

My love to Mr. Beardsley, whose work is all over Europe now.

LETTER No. 15

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
MOTT MEMORIAL HALL,
64 MADISON AVENUE,
NEW YORK,
12 *March* 1876.

MA CHÈRE MADAME CORSON,

Voici plus d'un mois que je me lève tous les matins avec la ferme résolution de vous écrire et toujours retenue dans mon projet avec l'idée dominante que si j'attendais il y aurait plus de raisons de jour en jour d'appuyer par des preuves flagrantes ce que j'aurais à vous dire.

La guerre est déclarée. Tous les chiens sont réveillés et aboient à la lune. Les spiritualistes m'ont condamnée. M'ont-ils executée ? Pas encore ; et ils trouveront plus difficile à le faire qu'à l'essayer.

Et d'abord—avant que je me lance dans quelques explications nécessaires, afin d'éclaircir la situation et de ne laisser aucune équivoque entre nous—je commence par vous dire que je sais depuis à peu près un mois que, pour des raisons *inscrutables* comme le sort lui-même, sans plus de motif alors que lorsque j'étais chez vous, Mr. Corson m'a appelée " impostor " en parlant de moi à un monsieur qui fait ou délivre des ballades—Clark, je crois.

Si l'expression a été plus douce je l'en remercie ; si elle a été accompagnée de quelque chose de plus fort encore, ni mon opinion, ni mon estime pour lui, ni la sincère amitié, estime et même affection

que je vous porte à vous ne peuvent être ni changées ni modifiées ni amoindries d'une seule ligne ! Je connais trop les effets et changements de décorations à vue d'œil produits par les habiles mécaniciens de *l'angel-girt* world, pour m'étonner de la moindre des choses que ces messieurs et dames du monde invisible sont capables de produire sur un tempérament nerveux comme celui de Mr. Corson. Le temps est le meilleur vengeur, Madame ; un jour peut-être Mr. Corson s'apercevra-t-il que c'était une insulte gratuite que je n'avais pas plus méritée de sa part, que je ne m'y étais attendue.

Mais passons là-dessus, car si j'en parle *at all* ce n'est que pour vous faire savoir que je le sais, et que si cela m'a coupée au vif et fait souffrir, le coup était amoindri car je le savais d'avance, je m'y attendais, et que cela devait être ainsi. Quant à moi, cela ne me change pas d'un atome et mes sentiments pour vous sont les mêmes qu'ils étaient au moment où nous nous séparâmes à la station.

On publie des infamies sur mon compte ; on tache de me faire *the confederate of the Eddies* ou bien celle d'Olcott,—trouvant impossible de me trouver une aventurière qui se donne des noms, des titres, des parents, et un rang dans la Société Russe qu'elle n'a pas, on tourne volte-face, on attaque ma réputation, *mon honneur*, par des insinuations basses et lâches, car je défie n'importe qui de publier autre chose que des insinuations et *une seule bonne preuve.*

Voici donc le grand moment ! Mme. Blavatsky quoique la fille de ses pères est une femme immorale, une femme qui a eu des amants à la pêle. Tandis que le Dr. Bloede raconte à Brooklyn *en secret*

que j'ai eu une liaison criminelle avec le Pape et Bismarck. Mr. Home, ce medium immaculé, répand son venin sur moi en Europe. Plus que cela, moi, qui travaille depuis l'été passé 18 heures par jour, je suis accusée dans des lettres anonymes envoyées à *mes amies* qui me les apportent avec indignation (comme Emma Hardinge Britten, par exemple) de fréquenter des maisons de rendez-vous. On offre à Emma H. B. de la conduire dans ces endroits et de lui donner des preuves, que j'y étais le même jour et à la même heure *qu'elle passait (toute une journée) avec moi !*

Fort heureusement que j'ai de vrais amies et amis ici—La sœur d'Olcott, une dame âgée et mère de six enfants que tout le monde respecte et connait qui m'a tellement prise en amitié qu'elle vient d'Orange deux où trois fois par semaine. Emma H. Britten, Mrs. Judge Miller, et Westbrook, qui sont toutes connues ici, sont mes amies constantes et sont prêtes à aller jurer sur le stand devant les magistrats, que jamais il n'y a eu de femme plus calomniée, plus lâchement, traduced que moi ! J'ai un paquet des lettres qui m'arrivent tous les matins, lettres de sympathie et d'estime et j'en suis fière, Madame.

Si vous n'étiez qu'une flappe-doodle spiritualiste, ma chère Madame Corson, je ne prendrais pas la peine de vous écrire tout cela, mais étant une des femmes les plus vertueuses et estimables que je connaisse, un *angel* comme vous appelle Monachesi constamment, je tiens à ce qu'un jour, le jour de la grande justice, vous puissiez vous dire que vous avez montré quelques traits d'amitié à une femme qui n'était pas tout à fait indigne de votre amitié, nonobstant qu'elle fume et jure même.

La vérité se fait lentement jour,—très lentement,—mais il est impossible d'étouffer la lumière sous le boisseau, et chaque lambeau de ma réputation, chaque crachat de venin empoisonné comme celui dont Dr. Bloede se fait la seringue, est un trou fait à la toile abaissée sur l'Angel World, " the sweet Spirit-Land," dont les habitants controlent les mediums en les inspirant de l'esprit de *charité, d'amour, de foi et de justice,* en les métamorphosant en des diables incarnés qui ne respirent que malice, mensonge, lâche calomnie, et tous les sept péchés capitaux !

Par les fruits on connaîtra l'arbre. Bien heureuse suis-je, si en perdant ma réputation je sauve des millions qui se perdent maintenant dans l'illusion que tous les esprits qui communiquent avec eux sont des anges de pureté, des *disembodied spirits.* Je suis prête à m'offrir en holocauste pour l'humanité. Je suis une vieille femme et il m'est facile de prouver que si on m'accuse maintenant, à New York, lorsque je suis du matin au soir, sous les yeux de mes amis, de quoi ne m'a-t-on pas accusée lorsque j'étais jeune et seule au monde alors comme maintenant. Et remarquez que mes plus ardents ennemis, ceux qui ne s'arrêteront devant aucune lacheté, aucune infamie, sont des spiritualistes et des *mediums.* Non ! Ni le Christ ni les Apôtres n'ont pas chassé tous les démons, et n'y parviendront jamais, car légion est leur nom ! Les Christ et les Apôtres de nos jours sont les mediums et les lecturers, les spiritualistes en un mot, qui prêchent réforme et annoncent à coup de trompettes le nouvel Evangile, le règne de Dieu maintenant que les mortels se confondent tellement avec les invisibles et les Immortels, or

ces Christ et ces Nouveaux Apôtres étant possédés eux-mêmes, des sept démons bibliques, qui veulent-ils réformer et à quoi ? Les rangs des spirites augmentent tous les jours, et avec chaque jour on entend et sent plus de malice, plus de méchanceté infernale. Les mediums se déchirent entre eux comme des bêtes féroces,—Home écrit un livre dans lequel il expose tous les mediums d'Amérique ; il est à la recherche de tous les pamphlets "which exposed mediums." Mr. et Mrs. Hardy déchirent Mrs. Thayer et autres. Les Holmes sont devenus *plus mediums* que jamais et fleurissent à Philadelphia en métamorphosant leurs poings, masqués en grand'mères, et angel-wives, et oncles militaires, et les spiritualistes gobent tout cela ! Dr. Child a recommencé à vendre son livre sur John King et Katie King publiquement, et Olcott possède 19 lettres écrites par des *esprits* et adressées tant à lui-même qu'à Gardner en le menacant de le tuer lui et Dr. Gardner s'il ôsait délivrer sa lecture à Boston contre les Elémentaires. Il l'a delivrée et même deux et vit encore !

Et pourquoi cette haine que rien ne peut assouvir, cette persécution constante, maligne, effrénée qui à elle seule tranformerait un criminel, un voleur et une—*mother of Harlots* en un et une martyre ? Tout cela parce que notre société composée en ce moment de 79 membres tous gens instruits, et presque tous quoique sceptiques désirent ardemment se convaincre de la Grande Vérité, de l'*Immortalité*. Spirits (intercourse) travaillent à séparer le bon grain du tas d'ordures pour s'assurer et prouver aux autres qu'il y a un monde des Esprits desincarnés, composé d'âmes

libérées, travaillant à progresser et à s'épurer à monter toujours en s'approchant de la grande Source Divine—*Dieu*, le grand Principe pur et invisible,—mais—qu'il y a aussi des mondes invisibles qui nous environnent remplis d'âmes non repenties—*unprogressed ! ! and malign spirits*, les *demons* de la Chrétienté, et de créatures sans aucune âme, principes élémentaires de la matière sans conscience, sans responsabilité comme sans lumière parce que dénuées d'âme immortelle encore.

On pense que tout cela est de mon invention lorsque des montagnes de livres ont été écrits à ce sujet depuis 4000 ans et plus !

Si on me tuait aujourd'hui, les pierres du chemin crieraient la vérité après moi. Qu'ils écrasent donc la Société Théosophique. Que Dieu vous garde et vous bénisse. Que le *All Good and Wise* vous protège. Tel est le fervent désir de celle qui se signe pour la dernière fois.

Votre dévouée,

H. P. Blavatsky.

Translation of French Letter dated March 12, 1876.

The Theosophical Society,
Mott Memorial Hall,
64 Madison Avenue,
New York.

My dear Mrs. Corson,

For more than a month I rise in the morning with a firm determination to write you—always firm in my resolution—and with a dominant idea that if I should wait there would be a better opportunity from day to day to support by positive proofs what I wish to tell you.

War is declared. All the dogs are awakened and are barking at the moon. The spiritualists have condemned me. Have they executed me? not yet; and they will find it more difficult to do it than to attempt it.

And first—before I start—certain necessary explanations, that I may clear the situation and allow no misunderstanding between us, I tell you that I have known for almost a month, that for some inscrutable reasons, like fate itself, without any more motive than when I was with you, Mr. Corson called me an "impostor" in speaking of me to a gentleman who makes up or tells tales —Clark, I believe.

If the expression had been kinder I could thank him for it, if it had been accompanied by something stronger still, neither my opinion nor my esteem for him, nor my sincere friendship and esteem and even affection for you could be changed or modified in the least degree. I know too well the effects and changes of decorations made quickly by skilful scene-changers in this angel-girt world, to astonish me in the least by anything which these gentlemen and ladies of the invisible world are capable of producing on a nervous temperament like that of Mr. Corson's. Time is the best avenger, Madame. Some day, perhaps, Mr. Corson will recognize that this was a gratuitous insult which I had not merited from him and which I had not expected.

But let us pass on. If I speak of it at all it is only to let you know what I know, and if it has wounded me to the quick and made me suffer, the blow was softened, for I knew it in advance and was awaiting it, and that it had to be as it

was. As for me it does not change me by one atom, and my feelings for you are the same as they were when we parted at the station.

Slanders are published about me ; they try to make me a confederate of the Eddys, and even of Olcott. Finding it impossible to make me out an adventuress who gives herself names, titles, relatives and rank in Russian society or a turncoat, they attack my reputation, my honour, by base and cowardly insinuations ; for I defy them, no matter who they may be, to publish anything but insinuations, or one single good proof.

The time has come. Madame Blavatsky, the daughter of her fathers, is an immoral woman who has had her lovers in numbers. Whilst Doctor Bloede, of Brooklyn, tells secretly that I had had a criminal liaison with the Pope and Bismarck, Mr. Home, that immaculate medium, spread his venom over me in Europe. More than that, I who worked since last summer eighteen hours a day, am accused in anonymous letters sent to my friends, who indignantly carry them to me (like Emma Hardinge Britten, for example), of frequenting houses of assignation. One to Emma H. B. offers to conduct her to these places, and to give her proofs that I was there the same day and hour that she passed with me. Most fortunately I have true friends and friends here. The sister of Olcott, a lady of years and mother of six children, whom everybody respects and knows, has so taken me into her friendship that she comes from Orange two and three times a week. Emma H. Britten, Mrs. Judge Miller, and Mrs. Westbrook, who are well known here, are my constant friends, and are ready to go on the stand before magistrates

and swear that never has there been a woman more calumniated and more cowardly traduced than I. I have many letters every morning of sympathy and esteem, and I am proud of them, Madame.

If you were only a flap-doodle spiritualist, my dear Madame Corson, I would not take the trouble of writing you all this, but being on the contrary one of the most virtuous and estimable women that I know, an angel, as Monachesi calls you constantly, I write you. I look for the day, a day of justice, when you will be able to say to yourself that you have shown some friendship for a woman who was not entirely unworthy of your friendship, notwithstanding that she smoked and even swore.

Truth comes slowly into the light, very slowly; but it is impossible to hide the light under a bushel. Each shred of my reputation, each spittle of venom like that which Dr. Bloede uses in his syringe, is a hole made in the curtain lowered over " the angel-world," the " sweet spirit-land," whose inhabitants control the mediums, supposedly inspiring them with the spirit of *charity*, of *love*, of *faith*, and of *justice*, while changing them into incarnate devils who breathe only malice, lying, and cowardly calumny, and all the seven cardinal sins.

By its fruits one shall know the tree. Indeed happy am I, if, in losing my reputation, I save millions who are lost now in the illusion that all spirits who communicate with them are angels of purity, disembodied spirits. I am ready to offer myself as a holocaust for humanity. I am an old woman, and it is easy for me to prove that if

I am accused now in New York, where I am from morning to night under the eyes of my friends, of what was I not accused when I was young and alone in the world? And remember that my worst enemies, they who do not stop at any baseness, any infamy, are the spiritualists and the mediums. No! neither Christ nor the apostles have chased away all the demons, and they never will succeed, for their name is legion. The Christ and the apostles so-called of our day are the mediums and the lecturers, the spiritualists, in a word, who preach reform and announce with a blast of trumpets the new gospel, the kingdom of God now which mortals so confound with the invisibles and the immortals, the so-called Christ and new apostles being possessed themselves of the seven Biblical demons. Whom do they wish reformed, and changed into what? The ranks of the spirits increase daily, and with each day one hears and feels more malice, more infernal wickedness. The mediums tear each other like wild beasts. Home writes a book in which he exposes all the mediums in America; he is seeking all the pamphlets which expose mediums. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy attack Mrs. Thayer and others. The Holmeses have become greater mediums than ever, and flourish in Philadelphia metamorphosing their fists, changed into grandmothers and angel-wives and military uncles, and the spiritualists gobble all that. Dr. Child has started again to sell publicly his book on John King and Katy King, and Olcott has nineteen letters written by the spirits and addressed to him as well as to Gardner threatening to kill him and Gardner if he dares deliver his lecture in Boston against the

elementaries. He has delivered it and even two and still lives.

And why this hate which nothing can soften, this constant malign frenzied persecution which in itself would transform a criminal, a thief, and a mother of harlots into a martyr? All this because our Society is composed at this time of seventy-nine members, and all instructed people, and almost all, although skeptics, ardently desirous of being convinced of the grand truth of immortality, of spirit intercourse working to separate the good seed from the heap of manure, in order to assure and to prove to others that there is a world of spirits discarnate, composed of liberated souls labouring to progress and to be purified in order to mount higher in approaching the grand divine Source, God, the great Principle, pure and invisible. But there are also invisible worlds which surround us, full of non-repentant souls, *unprogressed!* and *malign spirits*, the demons of Christendom, and creatures without any soul, elementary principles of matter without conscience, without responsibility as well as without light, because still bereft of an immortal soul.

They think that all this is of my invention, when mountains of books have been written on the subject since four thousand years and longer.

If I am killed to-day the stones of the road will cry out the truth after me. Let them wipe out then the Theosophical Society.

May God guard you and bless you, may the All-Good and Wise protect you. This is the fervent desire of one who signs herself for the last time

Your devoted

H. P. Blavatsky.

LETTER No. 16

NEW YORK,

Aug. 28, 1878.

MADAME C. R. CORSON.

CHÈRE MADAME CORSON,

Vous avez eu raison lorsque vous avez écouté la bonne inspiration qui vous a mis la plume à la main pour m'écrire. Ayant toujours eu plus d'ennemis que d'amis, votre silence subit et sans motif apparent ne m'a pas étonnée quoiqu'il m'ait vraiment peinée. Mais, n'en parlons plus ; vous aviez vos raisons, et cela me suffit. Au contraire je suis ravie d'apprendre la raison de cette rupture qui a été si inattendue pour moi ; j'y attribuais une toute autre raison, et comme le chat qui se sent toujours fautif après avoir volé un morceau de viande, je pensais que vous aviez appris par quelqu'un de Philadelphie la vérité sur la mystification dont nous nous sommes amusés pendant trois mois : je fais allusion à ce mariage conseillé par les " esprits " entre moi et cet imbécile qui était vingt ans plus jeune que moi. Pour me moquer des Spiritualistes, des Esprits, et surtout de mon ex-amie Mrs. Louise Andrews,—qui, dès que je lui fis savoir mon *alleged intention*, se mit à m'écrire des lettres pleines de jalousie,—je communiquais *sous secret* cette nouvelle à plusieurs de mes amis, leur faisant accroire que tout était *consumatum est* et

que j'étais mariée. C'était bête à moi et je m'en suis repentie bien souvent ; car cela a fait causer les mauvaises langues, d'autant plus que ce monsieur, à peine vous avais-je quittée à Ithaca, s'est marié publiquement à une demoiselle Allan. J'espère que vous ne pensez pas que je vous aie trop menti loin de mon séjour chez-vous ? Je me souviens qu'à peine de retour à New York j'avais l'entention de vous écrire que ce n'était qu'une plaisanterie de mauvais aloi mais vous ne m'en avez pas donné le temps. Je vous en prie, chère Madame Corson, n'en parlez plus à personne. Tout le monde l'a oublié, et j'ai positivement honte de m'être prêtée à cette comédie, qui selon les lois de N.Y. et de Philadelphie aurait pu avoir des mauvaises conséquences pour moi, car il y a eu beaucoup de personnes qui l'ont prise au sérieux.

Je vous envoie la lettre que vous me demandez pour M. Aksakof ; et je vais lui en écrire une autre d'ici. Je ferais tout ce qu'il est en mon pouvoir, mais j'ai bien peur que la condition des finances russes pour le moment, après cette guerre, et les poches qui ont été forcément vidées, le moment ne soit mal choisi. Mais qui sait ? Peut être aurez-vous de la chance après tout. Ecrivez à M. Aksakof tout ce que vous m'avez écrit à moi ; il connait tout le monde et il se peut qu'il vous trouve une bonne place. Je lui écris exprès sur papier *théosophique* car comme membre de la S. T. il se croira obligé de faire tout ce qu'il pourra. C'est une des lois de notre Société de s'aider réciproquement et de toujours travailler les uns pour les autres. Notre Société a grandi, chère Madame, et d'enfant malformé et hué par

tout le monde elle s'est dévelopée en un géant qui compte ses membres par milliers et s'est dernièrement *affilée* à la plus grande Fraternité Esotérique des Indes—L'Arya Samaj. Nous avons des membres Indous, maintenant, par milliers ; et notre chef suprème Swami (Saint) celui qui produit des " miracles ") Dyanand Sarasvati, le plus grand *scholar* aux Indes, l'orateur le plus distingué, qui attire à lui tous ceux qui l'entendent prêcher, nous ordonne de venir aux Indes. Il y a deux millions d'Arya-Samajees déjà dans l'Inde et des nouveaux membres sont recrutés tous les jours. A part la science psychologique et les études des sciences occultes notre Société, dont le programme est d'établir une Fraternité de l'Humanité, est aussi une société réformatrice. " We go dead against *idolatry* in every shape and colour, whether in the heathen or Christian religion " ; car voyons, chère amie, vous avouerez que les saints et saintes des Eglises grecque et latine sont tout autant des idoles que celle du Panthéon Indou ? Notre Arya Samaj est une société réformatrice, et les journaux appellent notre chef " Le Luther des Indes." Et je parie que " my wife's sister's niece's child " donnerait quelque chose pour être temoin des merveilles en fait de phénomènes que nos frères indous produisent à volonté sans les mettre ni sur le dos des " Esprits " ni sur celui du bon Dieu, car notre philosophie rejette tout " miracle " et ne croit à rien de *surnaturel*. Avez vous lu ou vu mon livre ? Je voulais vous en envoyer un exemplaire lorsque la première édition a paru au mois d'octobre dernier, mais j'ai eu peur que vous ne me le renvoyiez. La première édition (1000

copies) fut vendue dans neuf jours, et les deux autres sont épuisées depuis bien longtemps. Mon Editeur Bouton, en fait imprimer une quatrième édition pour octobre. Les journaux anglais l'ont loué bien plus encore que les critiques américains et il n'y a eu que le *Sun* seul qui mit en pièce mes ouvrages. Avant même que de le lire, il l'a débiné. "*The Herald* gave the most flattering notice." Enfin je m'en fiche! Je pars pour les Indes et "three cheers for the Heathen Hindoos"!

Il est probable que nous ne nous reverrons jamais, mais, croyez que l'amitié affectueuse que j'ai toujours eue pour vous et mon estime pour Mme. C. R. Corson ne s'affaibliront jamais. Si votre "wife's sister's niece's child" ne m'en veut plus (??) dites-lui que je l'embrasse. Si non, et s'il m'en veut encore dites-lui que je ne l'embrasse pas, mais que je l'aimerai toujours.

C'est dommage que je n'aie pas su que votre fils fut à Vienne. Mes deux tantes, les générales Witte et Fadeif, ma sœur, Mme. Tieloy, et mes deux cousines y ont été depuis le printemps. Elles sont toutes allées à Carlsbad maintenant.

Monsieur votre fils eut trouvé en elles une société agréable. Elles parlent toutes l'anglais et le français.

Et maintenant adieu, chère Madame Corson; croyez moi, mon désir le plus sincère serait de vous voir heureuse et contente car vous l'avez bien mérité.

A vous de cœur,

H. P. Blavatsky.

302 W. 47th St.
N.Y.

Letter 16 (translation).

NEW YORK,

August 28, 1878.

MADAME C. R. CORSON.

DEAR MRS. CORSON,

You were right when you were inspired to take your pen and write to me. Having always had more enemies than friends, your silence, sudden and apparently without motive, did not astonish me, although it truly pained me. However, let us not speak of it further ; you had your reasons and that is sufficient. On the contrary, I rejoice to learn the reason of this rupture, which was entirely unexpected and which I had attributed to quite another cause. Like the cat which feels guilty after having stolen a piece of meat, I thought you had learned from someone in Philadelphia the truth about the mystification we amused ourselves over for three months. I allude to that marriage suggested by " the spirits " between me and that poor fellow who was twenty years younger than myself. To mock some spiritualists, and especially some spirits of my former friend Mrs. Louise Andrews, who, as soon as I informed them of my alleged intention, started to write me letters full of jealousy. I communicated the news in confidence to many of my friends, making them believe that all was consummated, and that I was married. It was stupid of me, and I have repented indeed often over it, for it made many evil tongues wag. Further, the gentleman, hardly had I left Ithaca, married

publicly a Miss Allen. I hope you do not think that I had lied to you too much, being far away from you. I recollect that almost after my return from New York I intended writing to you of this folly of bad alloy, but you did not give me any occasion. I beg of you, dear Madame Corson, do not speak of it further to anyone. Everybody has forgotten it, and I am positively ashamed to have lent myself to this comedy, which, according to the laws of New York and Philadelphia, might have caused serious difficulties, for there were many persons who had taken it seriously.

I send you the letter to Monsieur Aksakof which you asked for, and I shall write him another from here. I would do everything in my power, but I am indeed afraid that the condition of Russian finances at this time after this war when the pockets have been forcibly emptied, that the time is badly chosen. But who knows? Perhaps you have a chance, after all. Write to M. Aksakof what you have written to me; he knows everybody and he will be able to look out for you. I write him especially on Theosophic stationery, for as a member of the Theosophical Society he will feel himself obliged to do everything he can. One of the laws of our Society is to aid reciprocally, and always work one for the other. Our Society has increased from an ill-formed infant, hooted at by everybody, into a giant which counts its members by thousands and has recently been affiliated with the greatest esoteric fraternity of India, the Arya Samaj. We have Indian members now by the thousands, and our chief supreme Swami (saint), he who produces miracles, Dyanand Sarasvati, the finest scholar in India, the most

distinguished orator who attracts to him all those who hear him. He orders us to come to India. There are two million Arya-Samajees already in India, and new members are recruited every day. Apart from psychology and occultism our Society, whose programme is to establish a fraternity of humanity, is also a reformatory society. We go dead against *idolatry* in every shape and colour, whether in the heathen or Christian religions. You must admit, dear friend, that the saints of the Greek and Latin Churches are all as much idols as those of the Indian Pantheon.

Our Arya Samaj is a reformatory society, and the journals call our chief the "Luther of India," and I bet that "my wife's sister's niece's child" would give something to be a witness of the marvels produced phenomenally by our Hindoo brothers by their will-power without calling in the aid of the spirits nor by the aid of the good God, for our philosophy rejects all "miracles" and does not believe in the supernatural. Have you read or seen my book? I would have sent you a copy when the first edition appeared last October, but I was afraid you would return it to me. The first edition (one thousand copies) was sold in nine days, and the two others have been long sold out. My publisher, Bouton, has had printed a fourth edition for October. The English journals have praised it even more than the American critics, and the *Sun* alone pulled it to pieces; even before reading it they condemned it. The *Herald* gave the most flattering notice. Well, I don't care a pin about it! I start for India, and three cheers for the heathen Hindoos!

It is probable that we shall never see each

other again, but you must know that the affectionate friendship which I have always had for you and my esteem for Madame C. R. Corson will never diminish. If "your wife's sister's niece's child" is no longer angry with me (??), tell him that I embrace him. If not, if he is still angry, tell him that I do not embrace him, but I shall always love him.

It is a pity that I did not know that your son was in Vienna. My two aunts, Generals Witte and Fadeif, my sister Madame Tieloy, and my two cousins have been there since the Spring. They have all gone to Carlsbad now.

Your son would have found in them an agreeable society; they speak English and French.

And now adieu, dear Madame Corson. Believe me my most sincere desire would be to see you happy and content, for you have well merited it.

Heartily yours,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

302 West 47th St.,
N.Y.

LETTER No. 17

NEW YORK,

302 W. 47th ST,

Aout 28, 1878.

MONSIEUR M. ALEXANDER N. AKSAKOF,

6, Perspective de Nevsky, St. Petersbourg.

Permettez moi de vous présenter Madame C. Corson—épouse de Mr. Hiram Corson, Professeur à l'Université de Cornell, à Ithaca, N.Y. (E.U.) Amérique—à Heidelberg tous deux, pour le moment ; et à qui selon son désir j'envoie cette lettre—pour en faire ce qu'elle voudra.

A part l'honneur qu'elle me fait de se dire une de mes amies, Madame C. R. Corson—selon l'avis unanime de tous ceux qui la connaissent—est une dame dont l'éducation solide et brillante, sa bonté de cœur et son caractère irréprochable la font aimer et respecter de tous ceux qui l'approchent. Vous vous souviendrez peut-être, qu'il y a trois ans et plus, je vous écrivis plusieurs lettres datées d'Ithaca et, de la maison même de Madame et Mr. Corson. Tous deux et pendant plusieurs semaines me firent une de ces réceptions, franche, cordiale, et pleine de bonté, que je n'oublie pas facilement ; d'autant plus, que ma cigarette *inextinguible*, et mes manières de grenadier prussien en congé, me laissent

généralement, fort peu d'espoir d'en recevoir souvent de semblables.

Madame Corson vous expliquera elle-même, et mieux que moi, ce qu'elle désire. Mon rôle à moi, doit se borner à vous la recommander aussi chaudement que possible.

Je suis heureuse de saisir cette occasion de lui rendre un petit service ne fut-ce que pour prouver une fois de plus, que l'ingratitude n'a jamais été au nombre des vices dont la charité publique et toute chrétienne m'orne si abondemment et avec une générosité des plus rares.

Sur ce, cher M. Aksakof, veuillez croire à l'expression de la plus sincère et affectueuse estime de votre correspondante,

H. P. BLAVATSKY.

Qui vous prie de vous rappeler qu'il y aura bientôt quatre mois qu'elle n'a pas reçu un mot de vous.

Letter 17 (translation).

NEW YORK,

302 WEST 47TH ST.,

August 28, 1878.

M. ALEXANDER AKSAKOF,

6 Perspective de Nevsky,

St. Petersburg.

Permit me to present to you Mme. C. Corson, wife of Mr. Hiram Corson, professor at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., U.S.A.—both at Heidelberg for the time being, and to whom, according to her wish, I send this letter to use as she may desire.

Apart from the honour she has done me to call me one of her friends, Mme. C. R. Corson, universally recognized by all those who know her, is a lady whose education, solid and brilliant, whose goodness of heart, and whose irreproachable character, make her loved and respected by all those who come in touch with her.

You will remember, perhaps, that more than three years ago I wrote you many letters dated from Ithaca, and from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Corson. They both for several weeks received me with frankness, cordiality, and goodwill, which I cannot easily forget, all the more as my inextinguishable cigarette and my manners of a Prussian grenadier on furlough, left me little hope of receiving similar kindness again.

Mme. Corson will herself explain to you, and better than I can, what she desires. My duty is limited to recommending her to you as warmly as possible. I am glad to take this opportunity to render this slight service to her, if only to prove once more that ingratitude has never been among the vices with which public and Christian charity have so abundantly and with the rarest generosity adorned me.

With this, dear M. Aksakof, please believe in the sincerest and most affectionate esteem of your correspondent,

H. P. Blavatsky,

who begs you to remember it will be soon four months since she has received a word from you.

COMMENTARY ON THE LETTERS

I HAVE arranged the letters according to their dates. Some have no dates but the day of the week, but this is not of much importance. They were removed from their envelopes and pasted in the scrap-book, which prevented accuracy in the dates. Of course with some letters the dates might have been worked out, and I should have done this had it seemed to me necessary.

The first letter was on February 9th, 1875, and they have been numbered up to March 22nd, 1876. The two letters in French to my mother are dated March 12th, 1876, and August 28th, 1878, and the letter of introduction to Aksakof is on the same date. There was therefore more than two years between these letters. Whether during this interval there were any letters I cannot tell. The chances are that there were not, for my father carefully kept all letters, and he would have been especially careful with H.P.B.'s. I have a distinct recollection that he was approached by the Theosophical Society asking for these letters, but he declined to give them up. If I mistake not, Mrs. Besant herself asked for them but he declined her request.

He once asked me not to give them away when they should fall into my hands after his death. He never hinted to me that he wanted me to publish them.

A former student of my father's and one of his greatest admirers, Mrs. William Vaughn Moody,

of Chicago, wrote me but a few months ago begging me to have them published. She met H.P.B. during her visit to Ithaca, and she told me she used to make her cigarettes for her. She also said to me that while she was not a follower of H.P.B. in her Theosophical movement she recognized the greatness of her personality, and thought the letters should be published if they threw any light at all on her personality. I think her suggestion influenced me more than any inclination on my part for the task, for my own work and interests were wholly along my professional lines. But I should not have undertaken it at all had I not been greatly interested in the Theosophical movement up to the time of H.P.B.'s death, in 1891, and that I had read her books and most of the writings published during the first decade of the Theosophical movement, and had the books in my own library.

As I have already stated, the Vedanta Society's publications, and especially the works of Vivakananda, interested me more and had much more influence in teaching me the philosophy and religions of the East. The disciples of Ramakrishna founded the Vedanta Society, and they accomplished a great work in the United States by their lectures and publications. To those who failed to get from the Church as constituted and organized the comfort and consolation which they sought, the esoteric philosophy of the East came as a balm of Gilead, and much more than that, for it helped to explain much in the teachings of the Christian Churches which was otherwise obscure. The Hindoo helped to make a better Christian, or, at least, a more consistent and

intelligent one. Christ Himself became a more approachable figure.

Now, the Theosophical Society was a good forerunner of the Vedanta Society, and as it developed, it came nearer to the purely Indian movement. I do not know its present status, but if its membership is less it's a better selected one, and the influence of Mrs. Besant and her co-workers have proved of greatest value.

Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott were in a way pioneers in an effort to bring the much neglected teachings of the East into the Western world, and they were opposed and even slandered, as pioneers often are. They not only deserve recognition but they deserve praise, and their names will go down in history as prominent figures in the evolution of the religious thought and spirit of the West. Their mistakes and blunders were those of pioneers feeling their way, and when viewed critically were of but little influence on the progress of the movement itself. They suffered for their mistakes while the cause itself benefited by them.

Letter No. 2, with the date from the post-mark only, February 16th, 1875, is in a way the best letter and the most impressive one which she wrote to my father ; it clears up, to my mind, the whole slander directed against her in regard to her deserting " spiritualism," so called, for the Theosophical Society. At the time this letter was written she was moving heaven and earth to find out the genuine in modern spiritualism, and to detect fraud among the mediums, and more than all that, to try and improve the literature of

the movement in this country. As may be seen in some of her other letters, she did much to found and keep going the *Spiritual Scientist* in Boston, edited by E. Jerry Brown. Her object was to give a more philosophical character to the articles, and to eliminate much irrelevant and unevidential stuff which in a way made up the chief body of the *Banner of Light* and the *Religio-Philosophical Journal.* Spiritualism at that time was in a very crude state, and naturally so. It was but twenty-five years from the Rochester knockings, and great and striking as this first awakening stage was, and remarkable, too, as were the manifestations among a few selected mediums, there was no critical attitude, no middle ground for calm reflection and study. The phenomena were either heavenly or damnable. These determined purposes of H.P.B. were in no way antagonistic to her settled belief that the manifestations were often, if not mostly, a low form of communion with the spiritual world. By her own experiences in occultism, and by the teachings of the Eastern ascetics and adepts, this conviction had been burnt into her for several years. Spiritualism as a cult had not found a fertile soil in India. There is none of it in Vedanta, and in India generally the phenomena were regarded as the result of evocations and black magic, where the aid of lower spiritual entities were invoked. The phenomena which were produced by trained adepts, who had passed through a long and severe course of yoga, such as reading the thoughts of others, and projecting the astral body, and certain other occult phenomena, were considered as independent manifestations, and

a highly spiritual-minded man, and there was no restraint. But in dealing with a public there was a large uneducated and unspiritual mass which she must have dreaded, and naturally so. She probably had in mind a French proverb: "Toute la vérité n'est pas bonne a dire."

This is the only solution of the situation which I can give. The verdict of the S.P.R. is in line with many of their other verdicts, which, to use a slang expression in America, is "rough stuff." It would have been much better to have introduced the Theosophical Society with a penny whistle than by a blast of trumpets. "Die milde Macht ist gross," of Goethe, would have been good advice.

Letter No. 3 is only valuable as showing H.P.B.'s intense desire to unmask fraud, and that she is willing to pay for the publication of her article to accomplish it. Why she suggested the *Springfield Republican* I can only explain on the ground that she had long corresponded with a lady in Springfield, Massachusetts, who was an ardent spiritualist and also much interested in H.P.B. This letter is also good evidence of her effort to try and compel the spiritualistic journals to come out in the open and not prevaricate, or try and conceal the fraudulent side of the movement. It is easy to understand their attitude in this matter; it is easy to understand their self-deception in wishing to keep silent about the fraud and other objectionable features in their cause at a time when the entire subject was under bitter denunciation and ridicule. For anyone to come out and publicly proclaim himself a spiritualist required great moral courage, and subjected the person to

severe criticism, and even to financial embarrassment, and this even holds to-day. I may mention Sir William Crookes in this connection, a famous chemist and scientist, a member of the Royal Society, whose investigations into the phenomena were most careful and comprehensive, and who yet was severely criticized and even scorned by his confrères. My father, an honoured professor in a great university, had this moral courage, and wrote an article for the *Cornell Era* upholding the truth of the phenomena ; he endorsed the movement as a timely one when faith in the spiritual and supernormal was at its ebb. He felt that spiritualism would be an aid to man's faith in his immortality. It was a surprise to me that the officers of the university did not take umbrage at this public declaration of his faith, but nothing was done, and his influence in the university was in no way impaired. His teaching of English literature was always on its spiritual side, fine scholar as he was, and against the usual course in the schools, where much time was taken up with mere outside circumstances of time and place, and the small details of the ordinary life of genius. He disliked the word environment, and thought it rather fortunate that we knew so little about the details of Shakespeare's life.

We can understand, then, why he was anxious to meet H.P.B. and to have her in his home as a guest. It is interesting to note in his letter that he had hoped to have some " sittings " with her as though she were an ordinary spiritual medium, and his disappointment when she showed no inclination for any " phenomena." The precipitated picture of my sister was almost the only

one she did of her own accord, and we learn from her letter how much she repented of doing that after my mother's attitude in the matter. Had H.P.B. wished in any way to show off she had a good opportunity in this university town; she may have felt, however, the antagonistic atmosphere of the place, for marvels and the supernormal are usually foreign to a university. When Professor Antony called she was anything but gracious, and begrudged the time from her writing.

Letter No. 4 is one of her longest and most remarkable letters, and it is, moreover, a very beautiful one. There are a number of points which I may comment on.

She speaks of her illness, of being swollen up, with her face as big as a pumpkin. Whether this had any relationship with the dropsy from nephritis which occurred later I cannot say. Olcott writes in *Old Diary Leaves* of the severe illness she passed through in June of that year from an injury to the bone of her leg, when an eminent surgeon had advised amputation, but which, Olcott writes, was recovered from in some occult way in the night. We have no definite details about this occurrence, so that it cannot be further discussed. Several years later in India she had an attack more aggravated still with general dropsical swellings, and she went to the Thibetan border and returned in three days apparently cured. She lived several years afterwards, and died in 1891 apparently from the same trouble.

In this letter, as in all her letters which I have

read, and few indeed have escaped me, does she at any time praise or vaunt herself. She is keenly conscious of the fact that after her stormy youth and many wanderings and hardships her face showed the storms she had passed through and the emotional and spiritual struggles she had battled with. She was an old woman at forty, but with the energy of youth, and with a set purpose which defied everyone and everything. I know no prominent person in literature who has been so candid and free in her analysis of herself. It is pathetic the way in which she apologises for her Russian smoking and swearing; she trusts to find in my mother, who was French, and yet, unknown to her,—most punctilious in regard to all straying from the respectable conventions of the day—one who would overlook these irregularities. As already quoted by me, my father found her lacking in the graces and amenities of life, and called her a Russian bear, yet, after she left, wrote me "we enjoyed her visit." Of course they did. She was too big a character, too exceptional a personality not to be interesting, for the exceptional is always interesting, and often inspiring, while the commonplace is deadly dull, and often passes all endurance. And it was a great thing to have had this woman for a guest for nearly four weeks; she gave you something to think about; she could help you to forget the dreary commonplace even in a university town. I have met many learned bores and many more respectable bores who have nothing to recommend them, not even scholarship. She may have been a Russian bear, but she was a very great one, and vastly greater than any

of her traducers, who may have been as gentle and tractable as Mary's little lamb when they were not dealing with subjects which had no place in the clubs, or in the drawing-room, or in Parliament, or in the university. Personally, I am glad that she smoked cigarettes and swore in Russian like a trooper and wore loose wrappers instead of the corseted gowns of the Rue de la Paix. These everyday people are sometimes the death of you.

The great poet Walt Whitman was uncomfortable in their presence, and he usually fought shy of the academic professor. It took some time before he was willing to take my father into his full confidence. He loved the plain people, and his intimates were mostly from the working-people. The real secret of it was that he hated the artificial, and H.P.B. had reached this same mental state. It is really not mental, but a certain spiritual attitude hard to explain or put in words at all. It was a bit of the cosmic consciousness which sought out the human spirit without its earthly trappings. Let me lie on the ground in my solitude and look at the stars.

There was much of this in H.P.B., and it is a key to unlock some of the mysteries and irregular actions of her life. Such persons are bound to be misunderstood. Colonel Olcott, who knew her best and was longest intimately associated with her, patiently stood all her fits of temper and vituperations on what she considered his stupidity at times, simply because he saw her greatness. The game was worth the candle.

What she writes in this letter on reincarnation as a belief among the French spiritists, requires

comment and explanation if it can be explained. While in Buddhism it is a definite concept and quite universally believed, and adopted as a basic principle in the Eastern philosophy, it may not have been so stressed among the mystics of the Middle Ages or in her own strivings and wanderings after the "*sciences occultes*." But I do not think this can hold. It was the dominant idea throughout the East. It was almost the keynote in Plato's philosophy. The Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and Proclus is full of it ; with a belief in the immortality of the soul you cannot evade it.

The only explanation to my mind is that she kept silent as she did in so many other things at that time. She must have been aware that it would have been repugnant to the American spiritualists, and I am not aware that even to-day it is acceptable to them. I do not think it is acceptable in England either. The majority of spiritualists are not philosophically inclined, and do not care to look beyond the mere fact of intercourse between the two worlds. As a theory or as a basic principle of the Eastern religions it still demands a very subtle and very extensive analysis to put the idea into any shape and to give it a philosophical basis. In her later theosophical writings H.P.B. does go into the subject with great detail and great subtlety, and the reader must turn to her works for a comprehensive view of the question. Certainly I cannot touch upon it here at all. My idea is that she was silent, just as she was silent on other matters which were extensively elaborated in her later writings. As a matter of fact, she had all that she could attend to, and more too.

She referred to M. and Mme. Leymarie as representatives of the French spiritists and as exponents of the literature of spiritism in France, independently of the teachings of Allan Kardec. She wanted the Boston *Spiritual Scientist* more after the French model, as more philosophical, and less occupied with insignificant and unevidential details.

In the letter she writes: "You invite me so kindly to the Cascade." This requires some explanation. At that time a Mrs. John Andrews, a very excellent woman, the wife of a carpenter, a strong medium for physical manifestations, was holding séances at a little place called Cascade, on Owasco Lake, where my father and mother had gone for some séances which had proved satisfactory, and they had invited H.P.B. to attend them as their guest. Evidently she had other work on hand and was not especially interested.

It is interesting to note what she writes about her articles on spiritualism: "Don't think for a moment, my dear Mr. Corson, that it is vanity or author's pride that speaks in me. If I write well enough in other languages, and I know I do, I know well enough at the same time that I have nothing to boast of in my English articles." As a matter of fact she writes marvellously well for a foreigner, and a native born might be proud of the work. As Count Witte writes, her grasp of a foreign language was extraordinary. She seemed to feel the very genius of the language in all its forms and nuances, and we occasionally come upon a slang expression given with its full force and significance. When my father writes of his daughter as "dead" and "lost," she rebukes him

in a gentle and beautiful way as untrue to his convictions as a spiritualist. The letter is all sincerity from beginning to end, she need not fear its publication; it is a genuine expression from a genuine woman.

Letter No. 5 is of interest on several points. She mentions the trouble with her leg and her confinement to bed. Ordinary mortals under such conditions don't write letters, but we see here the evidence of her indomitable will which nothing could control or turn from its course. And throughout her life as we know it there was this same intensity of purpose and endeavour. Even when dropsical she was at her desk writing, and so to the last day.

She writes of "the abstruse subject" of spiritualism and of my father's "need of spiritual truths," and the necessity of certain "simple facts" to clear up the doubts and questions in his mind. I was so long away from home that I never learned from him the results of her talks with him on the subject; how far she went in bringing out her own theories and ideas on the subject; whether she elaborated what she had already written him about her "spiritualism" and its differences from its modern phase.

Her description of her portrait and the "extra" is not only amusing, but shows that she views it quite differently from the ordinary spiritualist. I am glad that I can reproduce this strange photograph. The other photograph taken by Beardsley, of Ithaca, gives us a good idea of her general appearance, and I am not aware that any one like it has been published.

What she writes of Professor Wagner is also significant. She emphasizes the truth of the phenomena. As I see her position, it was always the truth of the phenomena. Never in any of her letters nor in her writings has she expressed herself as the ordinary spiritualist as we use the term. One should never forget that this term can have the widest significance, and I am sure she uses it in her own peculiar way.

Professor Wagner calls up again Professor Charles Richet, and the "truth of the phenomena." This figure of Richet stands out in psychical research far above most of the scientists who have been associated in this work, and his book is a monumental one. He was the cautious indefatigible worker to discover the truth independently of all theories and emotions, religious or otherwise. No one among the English workers can be compared with him. Myers the genius could not help but believe in a spiritual world and in his immortality, though he always asserted he had worked and struggled hard for his belief. It came natural with him. He was not a scientist as we usually use that word. He was a poet and a lover of all expressions of the human spirit, and he could not think of genius except as an expression of immortality.

But Charles Richet was different. In a way he worked harder at psychical research than Myers did, but he worked as the physiologist and as the cool analytical scientist. He was after the physical reality, and after thirty years he got it and proclaimed it, but he could not class himself with the French spiritists or any spiritists; he could not feel sure of the spiritualists'

theory; he wasn't obstinate; he was only cautious. It was this class of man that H.P.B. was after, like Professor Wagner the zoölogist. The men she fought were those who denied everything without investigation. She wanted the phenomena generally established and then she could go ahead with her secret doctrine, and line all the phenomena up with her occultism.

If we compare John Tyndall's materialism with the great advances to-day in molecular and mathematical physics it seems juvenile. Mathematical physics has become really a spiritualized physics, for man's imagination has carried it to the very boundary line between the material and the spiritual world. Einstein, the greatest mathematical genius of his age, or perhaps of any age, has almost eliminated matter in his conception of the universe in its relation with the human consciousness.

Letter No. 6 is an interesting one and requires some comment. She refers to Howitt's Ennemoser which my father had read. William Howitt had translated the first volume of Ennemoser's *Geschichte des Thierischen Magnetismus*, under the title of the *History of Magic*. William and Mary Howitt were prominent figures in the early history of spiritualism, and their writings are all interesting and valuable. Howitt's *History of the Supernatural* is the best work he did and is a very readable book. The Howitts were Quakers, but gave up that faith when they became Spiritualists. Mrs. Howitt after the death of her husband became a Catholic and died at Rome at a very advanced age. Her autobiography in two volumes,

edited by her daughter, is a charming book and gives us a vivid picture of English life at its best in the first half of the nineteenth century.

What she writes of Slade would imply that she thought him a fraud. But after investigating him later she changed her mind, for she and Olcott recommended him to Aksakof as the best American medium for examination and experimentation at St. Petersburg by the Russian scientists. Slade from all accounts was genuine, and my father had good evidence of his genuineness. Lankester's attack on him in London was entirely unwarranted and was in line with similar attacks on mediums by those incapable of any judgment or justice. The trouble with Slade was that he had not gone directly to St. Petersburg but had stopped over in London for public séances. He was very carefully investigated in Germany by Zöllner, which led to Zöllner's publication of *Transcendental Physics*. Zöllner was a physicist and a mathematician with a much finer mind than Lankester, who was only a biologist. The latter saw nothing outside what his scalpel revealed. If physicists and biologists are materialists the physicist's is the higher materialism; it is at least an imaginative materialism.

As a comparison she writes: "Orestes turning back on Pylades, Castor accusing his bosom friend Pollux of lying information." There are numerous instances in her writings of an intimate knowledge of Greek mythology. She may speak of herself as unlearned, and she does so on many occasions, yet we have the best evidence that her store of information on many subjects was immense, and that she had a marvellous memory

which, as Lord Byron once wrote of himself, was "wax to receive and marble to retain."

Again she writes: "I am bedridden, and a helpless cripple to be perhaps. If my leg is paralyzed my brains are not paralyzed, that's sure, and will-power, my dear Mr. Corson, goes far when well applied by those 'who know how and when.'"

To this will-power H.P.B. often refers, and that she possessed it in a superlative degree we have ample evidence. No one can write continuously fifteen hours a day without it; no one can write such letters from a sick bed without it. In her polemical writings especially we are aware of this indomitable will. Of her phenomena she ascribes their production to her will-power. The simple raps she asserted as always produced by her will-power; it was all will-power by one who knows how and when. Psychical research along this line has not been extensively carried out, and there is a large field open and waiting for this work. Those who have watched H.P.B. at the time of her phenomena speak of the signs of the great effort of her will.

The great Russian bear had also a strong sense of humour; it was a part of her literary charm. She enjoyed a good story, and she never forgot it.

I never saw a copy of the *Spiritual Scientist*, but I can well imagine that the Diogenes column irritated her, and when she refers to the editor as having fished him out from a wash-tub in Boston, you feel she has a grim humour as well as a command of the English language.

In this letter, as well as in other letters, she shows her kind heart and her sympathy with

General Lippitt and Robert Dale Owen in their trouble with the exposure of the Holmeses. Both these men were honoured gentlemen and any suspicion thrown on their veracity or integrity was keenly felt.

It must be noticed that H.P.B. regarded the Holmeses as real mediums but also as employing fraud and trickery. This strange combination has also been shown in recent years. Eusapia Paladino attempted it at times. It seems to be related to the deceptions and trickery found occasionally among hystericals, where the lack of will makes the subject a mere tricking automaton.

The entire letter is an interesting one; it has its peculiar literary charm because it is spontaneous, direct, bold, and withal genuine.

Letter No. 7 may be called the "Labarum" letter. There are several points worthy of comment. The only date is Tuesday night, with "night" underscored, and as a postscript she wishes my father to put most faith in what she writes at night-time rather than in her scribblings during the daylight. The advice is significant, and suggests that she herself is aware that her writing may be partially at least a copying or a dictation. She has never hesitated to admit that her writing was supernormal at times; no writer has so candidly admitted outside help, seen or unseen. She shows again her interest in the *Spiritual Scientist* and contributes money even though the scrapings from the bottom of an empty purse.

As she took occasion during her visit to Ithaca to call my father a schoolboy, her letters indicate

that she regarded him much in that light as a correspondent, although she is very careful to be tactful and gracious with her own sense of superiority. She chides him over his expressions of grief and sorrow on the death of his daughter, though professing at the same time to believe fully in her continued existence. She certainly does not write like the ordinary modern spiritualist, but urges him to try to rise to his child's spiritual plane rather than to bring her down to his physical plane through the ordinary hired medium of the spiritualists. There is no doubt or equivocation in her attitude in the matter and her idea of the only real communion between the two worlds.

What she writes of phenomena as a basis for belief in immortality is surely the position taken to-day by all psychical researchers and spiritualists, and it is a strange and anomolous fact that the Churches do not hail and encourage every effort made in this direction, though the Christian religion itself is founded on it. The appearance of Christ at Emmaus as a positive proof of His resurrection, and all the miracles during His life, give a support to His teachings which was absolutely necessary to the new great spiritual dispensation.

Certain it is that the Catholic Church alone has kept the phenomenal and mystical elements of Christianity acutely alive by its central rite of the Mass, by its veneration and glorification of sainthood, together with the miracles inherent in holiness itself. It is this constantly vital mysticism which will ever preserve it from decay or destruction. It is of all religions, the religion of

beauty and imagination, the beauty of holiness. John Hyde Preston has put this better than any modern writer who has come to my notice. He writes: "We may not be able to accept all the premises of the Roman Church, we may not be able to accept any of them; but we can and do accept its magnificent transformation of the baser metals of life into what Pater loved to call the beauty of holiness. The appeal to the senses and the emotions is stronger in most of us than the appeal to the intellect. To the first, Catholicism directs its best energies: the first is what American Protestantism comparatively denies, and instead attempts to make its address to logic and the moral idea." (The *Virginia Quarterly Review*.)

Imagination is our fairy godmother which helps to bring to us this sense of beauty, as well as faith and devotion, and, when carried to its limit, our faith in immortality. But even imagination needs phenomena; it certainly needs a ritual, and the more beautiful the ritual the more it flourishes. I have not been able to reconcile H.P.B.'s attitude towards the Roman Church because there is so much in it that she professes, and with the Russian Church as a tradition if not a practice of her youth.

Although she goes very minutely and deeply into the symbolism of occultism in her books, I cannot find she has treated the "Labarum" exactly as she had done in this letter. It is a subject of which I am ignorant, and I can but admire the earnestness and evident erudition with which she treats the subject, whatever may be the source from which she has taken it.

The allusion to Robertus de Fluctibus is interesting, and I have quoted the title of the work exactly as she wrote it. I saw at once that there was some mistake in the Latin. She had confused Flood with the astronomer Gassendi. Gassendi's work bears the following title: "Epistolica Exercitatio, in quâ precipua principia philosophiae Roberti Fluddi deteguntur, et ad recentes illius libris adversus patrem Marinum Mersennum scriptos respondetur."[1]

This piece was reprinted in the third volume of Gassendi's works, published at Paris in 1658 under the title of "Examen philosophiae Fluddanæ," etc. (1630). It is unbelievable that H.P.B. had the works of Gassendi or of Flood at hand in her room in Philadelphia. The books of both these authors are very rare and very costly. The mistake points rather to a slip in her marvellous memory and accumulated knowledge, almost probably to a misinterpretation of what she saw clairvoyantly. This mistake is very significant and very interesting, though written at night when she felt most inspired.

Letter No. 8 antedates the previous letters in which the *Spiritual Scientist* is discussed. In this letter this magazine is first brought to my father's notice. Its value is simply to show her interest in the cause of spiritualism and her kindness of heart towards this young struggling editor, who has gotten himself in trouble for championing a very unpopular cause. H.P.B. as known to her intimates, in spite of her occasional

[1] See *The Rosicrucians, their Rites and Mysteries*, by Hargrave Jennings, London, 1887. Vol. II, p. 217.

fits of temper and rage had often a child-like kindliness. Octavia Hensel in her very well-written appreciation of H.P.B., wrote: "Much has been said of her fits of passion, but in them was an interesting study. Some people when aroused, reveal hidden depths of malignity and evil, and you feel you have been deceived by them; her passion was like that of a child who screams and kicks on the hearth-rug—you pick it up and kiss it and all is over. So, in the midst of her strongest bursts of passion, she would often strike herself on the forehead and say: 'What an idiot I am! You are right and I am wrong; my dear friend, forgive me.'" I copy this from an excellent description of H.P.B. in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 26th, 1894, which my father had carefully pasted in the scrap-book with her letters.

What she writes in a postscript about the "Labarum" I must leave to those who know about the subject. My father's seal was the traditional one found in the Churches, and generally regarded as expressing the thought Christ the Beginning and End. Of course H.P.B. wished to trace the emblem from its original source and show how it had changed in its significance. But in the course of time many emblems have so changed, just as words have changed in their meaning and significance. Language and symbols grow like living things. How many words we use daily have so outlived their first meaning that the philologist alone can trace them back to their source.

All signs and symbols seem to have interested her. The elaborate one on the envelope which I

reproduce, and I hope in its original colours, shows her love of the symbolism of occultism.

My father had one on his letter-head, a striking emblem, two Greek words forming an acrostic with their middle letter, the Greek words meaning light and life, enclosed within a circle formed by a serpent swallowing his tail, a symbol from the far distant past signifying eternity. Professor J. Rendel Harris, at one time Professor of New Testament Greek at Oxford, visited my father many years ago and noticed this emblem on his letter-head. He asked him where he got it. My father's reply was, "I got it out of my head." Professor Harris then informed him that he had

seen it on some old Syriac manuscripts: all of which goes to show that there is nothing new under the sun.

Professor Harris is still living, I believe, and has become famous as an archæologist and interpreter of old Greek texts.

That the ancients realized the intimate relationship between life and light was an inspiration, a leap in the dark towards the truth. That same truth has been brought even more intimately home to us through modern science, the slow but sure snail's pace of the modern laboratory

and scientific research. It is the same inspiration ; they only differ in their velocities.

Letter No. 9. We can see great differences in the quality of her letters ; she herself admits this, asking my father to have more confidence in what she writes at night than her scribblings during the day, as she puts it herself. In this letter, in her eagerness, her thoughts run ahead of her pen, and her sentences are more involved and drawn out.

Her detractors will still say that this letter shows her as the ordinary spiritualist, but I cannot so interpret it. I see her still as fighting for the truth of the phenomena, as the first step in this movement. And even to-day, after half a century has passed, the same spirit prevails among the better class of spiritualists. Get your facts first and be sure of them, and it will then be high time to try and interpret them. This was Professor Richet's position, and it is the only one.

In this letter, rambling as it is, she does come out in a very positive way to state her attitude : " Spiritualism as it is must be stopped in its progress and given another direction. The delusions and insane theories of some spiritualists are shameful in our century."

Now while at that time there were some great pioneers in the movement, the great mass of the literature, and especially in this country as it appeared in the *Banner of Light*—and in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, was worthless. Every bit of rapping nonsense, and trance speaking especially, was put down as direct messages

from the dead. The fact that much of it came from well-meaning and sincere people did not alter the situation. Fraud and all kinds of trickery and delusions were forgotten in the wild enthusiasm over the "summerland." You can understand Professor Tyndall's exclamation: "Man must have a religion even if he has to fly to the intellectual whoredom of spiritualism." Savagely as H.P.B. attacked Tyndall, it was for his materialism and lack of spiritual vision, rather than for his hostility to spiritualism, for she has expressed herself almost as viciously against a phase of spiritualism as she found it in this country. What she was after was a higher order of literature on the subject, more discrimination and more cool judgment. As she put it in this letter: "We have but very, very few scholars," and "What we need the most is brains and fearless indomitable minds to work up in the mental department at our command." Strangely put, but we can understand fully what she means. She wants to let Colby know "that there is behind the screens a small party of spiritualists who are after truth alone, and will never allow a lie or an exaggerated fact to spread abroad without trying to rectify it. They will never allow him, the truthful Colby, to withhold truth and help falsehood."

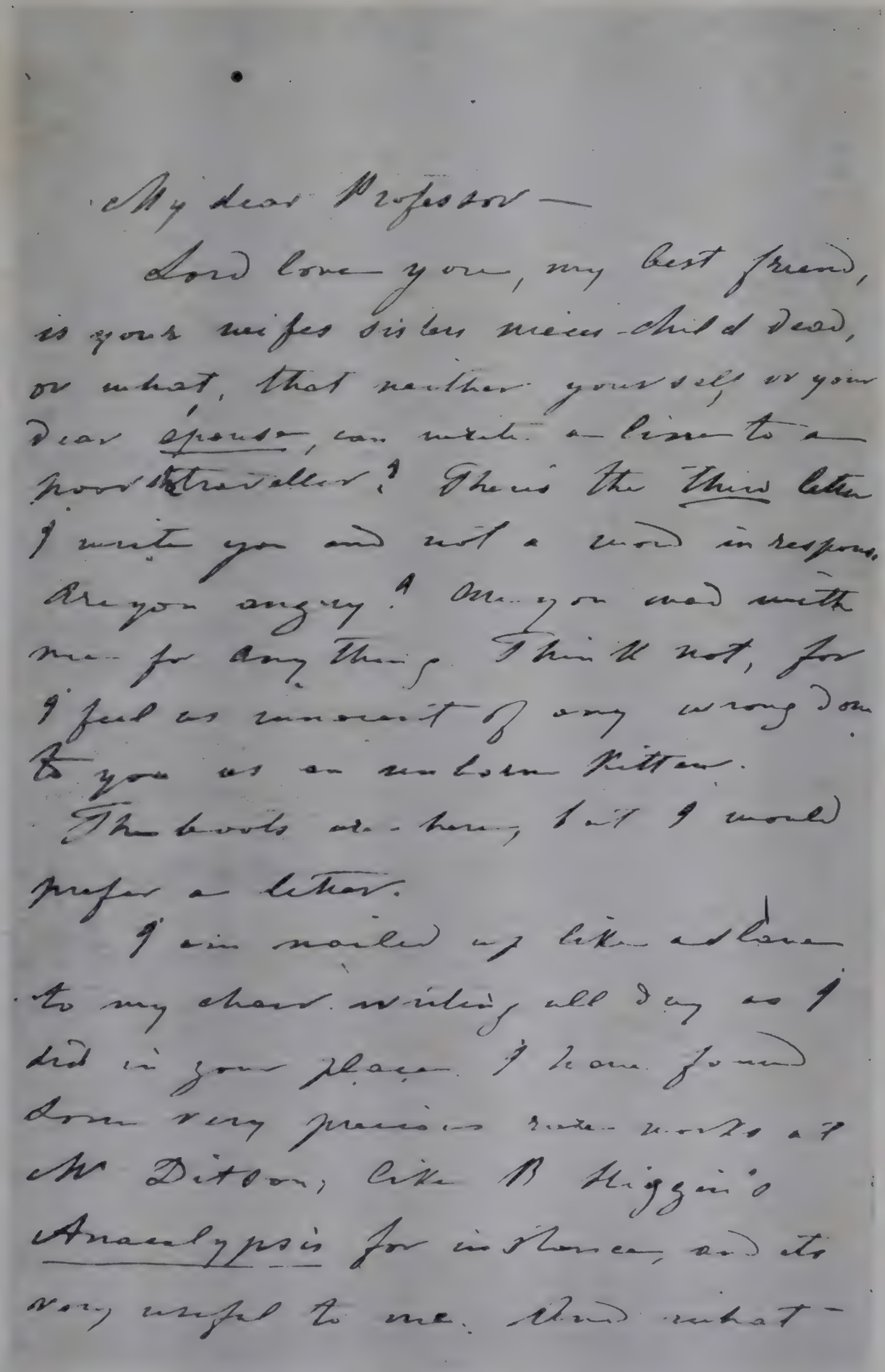
Surely this position was to her credit. Get the real phenomena but don't go crazy about them; whether from devils or undeveloped spirits, or from angels of light, get the phenomena, and they may be worked out to the truth. It is that spirit alone which has produced results worth considering.

It is easy to see that the woman was misunderstood, and being misunderstood, was slandered and vilified. Even after she had written my father so emphatically and definitely that her spiritualism was not the spiritualism of the Rochester knockings, and long antedated it, he still could not look upon her phenomena but as mediumistic and wrote me that he was disappointed that she had not given him some "sittings." Even when she sent him her photograph, taken by a "spirit photographer," she makes fun of the "extra," and does not reverence it at all as the usual spiritualist would. Her words and sayings were twisted into every conceivable shape to malign her.

She sees the troubles ahead of her. "I see the arduousness and barrenness of the journey lying before me, the impassable forms my path is covered with, but I do not fear or feel discouraged. I have received anonymous letters, threatening messages, and insulting warnings, but only feel like laughing at them. . . . Were I to fail or succeed, in either case I shall be laughed at, defamed, slandered, and blackmailed."

And all this came to pass, but she worked on to the last day.

The Letter No. 10 is a short one, but it is one of the finest. It was written after she had passed the crisis with her inflamed leg, and when any idea of amputation had been discarded. No one can read this letter without seeing the beautiful side of this remarkable woman. There is no hypocrisy here, and if you suspect it, you had better give up all faith in your fellow-man.



My dear Professor —

Lord love you, my best friend, is your wifes sisters nieces-child dead, or what, that neither yourself or your dear épouse, can write a line to a poor stratveller? There's the third letter I write you and not a word in response. Are you angry? Are you mad with me for anything. Think not, for I feel as innocent of any wrong done to you as an unborn kitten.

The boots are here, but I would prefer a letter.

I am nailed up like a slave to my chair writing all day as I did in your place. I have found some very precious rare works at Mr Ditson, like B Higgin's Anacalypsis for instance, and its very useful to me. And what —

REPRODUCTION OF AN ORIGINAL LETTER WRITTEN TO PROFESSOR CORSON FROM NEW YORK AFTER H. P. B.'S VISIT TO ITHACA SOME TIME IN 1877.

do you do, and pussy and the books and the apple trees? I feel as if I had left a home where I lived for twenty years. God bless you.

Is my dear Mrs Corson translating hard? Pon my word I feel as if all was not right, as if she was kind angry with me for something. Olcott wants me to go home (?!!) and does not even say where is this home. I like his impudence.

I send you the World, with an interesting letter in it addressed to Olcott, from un temoin oculaire. I will send you hereafter all the interesting things that might chance to come out, and the bye laws of our Society.

Did you read the two pro and con in the last Banner? Brittain versus Britten, one stating that she has

seen herself the Elementary, and the other denying that ever such a thing existed at all.

Well, we have lit a "goodly bonfire" as John says it. And I guess we will have to fight out our way pretty nice this winter for our Spiritual heresy.

Do, tell me please in a letter the words you told me about the Koran. "Every word of it is true" is it? I forgot them, and want really with my usual impudence to place them at the beginning.

I enclose 50 c. for Mary. I forgot to pay her for her last washing and she must think me mean.

God bless both of you

Do let us hear if it were but one word in answer. When

will Beardsley send me the rest of my portraits? Please order him two dozens more of those with the cigarette in the hand. only bigger if he can do them. I will enclose you a post office order for $8-50 in my next, if you answer me that he is on work at them. I suppose by the $13 he has charged me for the three dozens that the every extra dozen will be $4-25. Will you enquire please.

God rebless you.

Sincerely and truly yours

W P Blount

When she wrote: "You know I am a missionary, and a fanatic, too, by the way. You must believe in something else beside your 'Ennemosers and Howitts.'" Had this letter been made public at the time she might have silenced some of her slanderers and detractors who saw in her only a tricky turn-coat who had passed from an enthusiastic supporter of the investigation of mediumistic phenomena to a theosophist who looked beyond them.

To anyone who reads these letters it must be evident that this letter does not stand by itself. Throughout the whole series it is easy to see that in her endeavour to separate the true from the false phenomena, mediumistic though they were, she was looking far beyond the ordinary spiritualistic interpretation of them. She saw their value even with a very different interpretation. What she saw was the value of supernormal faculties of the human spirit as pointing to something more than the everyday functioning of the physiological man, beyond which the materialists did not look, and what is more important still, did not care to look. When Professor Huxley publicly stated that the phenomena did not interest him even if true, he was but speaking for a very large body of scientists, and of a very large body of the intelligentsia outside of science proper, who viewed them in the same light and in the same attitude of intellectual pride and self-sufficiency. When I was a student in the university more than a half-century ago there was practically no psychology taught. The lectures on the subject were a series of definitions or concepts or abstractions about which there was

no concrete knowledge whatsoever. Even Physiological Psychology was in its infancy, the academic psychology as it exists to-day.

Consciousness as we understand the term was not only static, but it had no range and no degrees of intensity. We were either asleep when we were unconscious, or awake when we simply knew we were awake and alive. Psychology as a philosophy of the East was never mentioned. Emerson, who probably more than anyone else at that time was in sympathy with the Eastern philosophy, preached it but in a vague and limited way. He never developed it or elaborated it ; his essays were but successions of statements, and Eastern thought did not get into the West in any noticeable way except through other channels and by other writers.

The New Church or Swedenborgianism did show, or attempt to show, in a limited way certain supernormal faculties as represented in Swedenborg himself. Henry James, the father of William James the psychologist, did attempt to popularize the general doctrine of the New Church, but the son was almost the first to put new life into the subject and did favour an investigation of these supernormal powers. As has happened in other lines of human thought and endeavour, outsiders have been the main contributors. It is those outside the laboratory who have put new life into psychology, and by psychology I do not mean the physiology of the nervous system ; this department of science belongs in the laboratory and is properly controlled by physiologists.

Modern spiritualism was but a revival of

interest in certain supernormal powers long known in history, sacred and profane. With all its crudities it brought the subject to a point that would not down. The supernormal had become the supernatural, and the world was more eager for it.

H.P.B. was fighting materialism, and spiritualism was a weapon to battle with. When later she saw in theosophy a better weapon she grasped it with a firmer hand. How far she was influenced by seen or unseen helpers it is hard to determine. As she has repeatedly stated, she was but the scribe. She may have made a serious mistake in burning down the bridge which had helped her on her way, and I am quite sure it was her greatest mistake; her immense labours and writings after the founding of the Theosophical Society explain it. As the expression goes, she had other fish to fry, but she should have fried the entire catch, big and little, edible and inedible. She had a big job on her hands and she realized it. She was a modern Mrs. Partington trying to keep back the Atlantic Ocean with her mop.

As prophesied by H.P.B. the quality of the phenomena has improved and a mighty host is on the open road. The Theosophical Society is still active. The Vedanta Society and many Indian scholars outside the Society, just as true representatives of the Eastern religions and philosophy, are taking an active hand; and the fight goes on. Those of simple faith do not need it, but there is an immense body who do, even though they are in the Church. I recall a fervid exclamation of Robert Elsmere at a dinner-

party: "It's better to believe than to know; it's better to pray than to understand." I quote from a hazy memory of the book. But this does not satisfy the earnest seeker, and the expression is too fanatical, for the spirit of man must ultimately *know*, or there is no peace. Some know soon by the grace of God, and many more have a weary journey and climb ahead of them, and they must have the phenomenal to hold on to.

She wrote nobly and with wisdom when she penned these words: "For nothing blinds so much your intuitions and perceptions and prevents you from hearing the whisperings of your spirit as too much study and pondering over books—'the dead letter that killeth.' Read more on the pages of your soul if you can and leave the idle speculations of others—outwardly scientific as they may appear—to the stony Tyndalls and the skeptical bookworms who live and die in other people's authorities, though in their pride they may fancy them their own."

If this is not fine writing I am no judge. Let us make our bow to genius, no matter how visaged and how garbed, for genius is power, and powerful because it comes from the depths of the immortal spirit of man, or, as F. W. H. Myers puts it, because it is an uprush from a diviner self.

Letter No. 11 is somewhat explained by Olcott in *Old Diary Leaves* (p. 57): "She fell dangerously ill in June from a bruise on one knee caused by a fall the previous winter in New York upon the stone flagging of a sidewalk which ended in violent inflammation of the periosteum and partial mortification of the leg; and as soon as she got

better (which she did in one night by one of her quasi-miraculous cures after an eminent surgeon had declared that she would die unless the leg was instantly amputated) she left him (i.e. her second husband) and would not go back."

This quotation helps us to place the dates of several of her letters where she complains of being ill and suffering with her leg.

This letter was written the day before the intended amputation. She admits calling for help from the unseen " and ask those I dread and fear, but who alone can save it from amputation, to come and help me." Whether those she dreads and fears are the " elementals " which she alludes to as helping her in her phenomena, is a question. It is the only way I can interpret the letter.

Olcott speaks of the sudden change as quasi-miraculous. This is of course very vague, and we must let the incident pass as one of the many mysteries attending her which can never be explained.

When she speaks of peeping from under the veil of Isis and coming down to have a chat with him, and that he must not be scared, it seems to me that she is joking only. The letter impresses me as one of confidence and that she had no fear of her dying, in spite of her last words, " *I will come*, yours truly here and there."

Letter No. 12 is very different from her other letters and brings out certain novel features. When she writes, " Is your wife's sister's niece's child dead or what ? " thereby hangs a tale. The story goes back to my youth and shows H.P.B.'s sense of humour. The story as told by my father

was something like this. The incident occurred in a large establishment in Philadelphia. The place was about to be closed up for the day, and my father with several others were discussing omens and perhaps other mysterious subjects. The Irish janitor was standing by evidently much interested. Suddenly he made bold to interrupt the talk, and this is what he said: "Gentlemen, pardon me for interrupting you, but I can tell you about a wonderful omen that happened to me. I was living in the city of Limerick with my wife's sister's niece, when my wife's sister's niece's child was taken very ill in the night, and I was sent out to get a doctor, and while on my way to the doctor's, I saw a man on the opposite side of the street enter a chemist's shop; *and that night my wife's sister's niece's child died!*"

H.P.B. enjoyed this story and she alludes to it twice in her letters. In a letter to my mother she speaks of my father as "my wife's sister's niece's child." She had a sense of humour, and you come across examples of it even in her serious writings, though usually in the form of a grim humour.

She suspects displeasure from my parents for some unknown cause. She writes: "Are you mad with me for anything? Think not, for I feel as innocent of any wrong done to you as an unborn kitten." There is a childlike simplicity about the letter. She would know what they were doing, whether my mother was busy with her translations, and how pussy was getting along and how the apple trees were flourishing. She did not suspect that they may have felt hurt over her disregard of the social amenities, and

lack of interest in the outside world. My parents had never met such a person and they could not fathom her. Even my father, who, of all men, could disregard the ordinary conventionalities of life, was nonplussed, and only later realized that he had housed a wonderful personality.

She evidently had had some misunderstanding with Olcott. In *Old Diary Leaves* Olcott mentions how difficult it was at times to get along with her, the *genus irritabile vatum*.

Though the Theosophical Society was founded she was still reading the *Banner*, and she is still getting communications from " John," who tells her they have lit " a goodly bonfire," and that they have a hard fight ahead of them on account of their " spiritual heresy."

The letter is a very human one, with its frankness and real affectionateness, and appreciation of the hospitality shown her. She has not forgotten the fifty cents she owed the washerwoman, and she had evidently taken pride in Beardsley's photographs of her.

Letter No. 13 is more private in its character than any of the letters but I can see no reason why it should not be published. What she writes of Olcott is written in strict confidence, and she appeals to my father as a gentleman, if not as a friend, to consider her letter as strictly confidential.

Of course it was generally known that Olcott was the ordinary worldly man with a family, and family ties and responsibilities, and that he had given up all this for the new life he had undertaken. I do not know the details, but I am

under the impression that he had arranged his affairs in a satisfactory way before his departure for India. That his sister was on friendly terms with H.P.B. would seem to point to this amicable settlement. The life in India was an ascetic one combined with great intellectual activities and with his whole heart in the work.

She still calls herself a spiritualist, as she has done throughout all her letters, but she draws a sharp line between the common phase of it and its higher practices. She brings out clearly her conception of "John King" as an undeveloped spirit, an ex-pirate who is still but a pirate, and she seems quite willing to depreciate herself to the extent of admitting her inability entirely to control him, and that she had therefore given him up. She has been criticized for holding him up as an exalted spirit, and then after the founding of the Theosophical Society calling him an evil or undeveloped one. I think this letter disproves this. What she writes of Sir William Crookes from the testimony of Massey I believe is entirely false. Sir William Crookes was always outspoken. He was fearless in making public his experiments in psychical research, as well as his remarkable experiences with "Katy King," and if he had thought her an elementary or evil spirit he would have publicly so stated. That he so believed and admitted in a private conversation with Massey I am sure is false, or that he was a follower of Eliphas Levi. "Katy King" in her reported talks stated that she was doing penance for past sins by materializing, a painful effort on her part and giving the world evidence of her continued existence as a sort of missionary work.

She further stated that she was going on a higher plane when she bid them good-bye. The scene as described was a dramatic one. All her talks and actions during this remarkable series of séances made her out a charming personality, and in the entire range of spiritualistic literature there is nothing quite so captivating as this remarkable experience. My confidence in Sir William Crookes is unbounded. I knew his scientific work, the very high quality of it, and his very fine character as a man, and I accepted his testimony in psychical research just as I accepted his labours in chemistry and in "radiant matter." He was a great pioneer in the most glorious phase of modern science. His experiments with the electrical discharges through the Crookes' tube made possible the wonderful discoveries which followed. I place him above Röntgen as a scientist, for Röntgen's discovery of the X-ray was an accident, though his mental grasp of the accident placed him among the great discoverers in science.

Sir William regarded "Katy King" as a distinct individual from the medium, and this conclusion of his I accept. I have heard certain men of science laugh at him and sneer at him who were not to be compared with him in any particular. He gave us certain facts which have never been disproved but, on the contrary, have been repeatedly corroborated, whatever the interpretation of those facts may be.

I believe also that H.P.B. has gone sadly astray in her depreciation of the general run of spiritualists, and her very uncalled for emphasis on free love. This part of her letter is simply nonsense, and how she got off on this side-track I am unable

to explain, and I say this fully realizing the many crudities, not to say frauds, in the early phase of the movement, a phase which may still exist to-day in a modified or limited way. As a religious movement it called forth certain emotions and illogical ideas which were bound to militate against the cool judgment of the investigator, as well as against a wise analysis of the proved facts.

As I have already expressed myself in a preceding chapter, both H.P.B. and Olcott blundered grievously in their early efforts, and it is surprising when you consider their mental equipment, and what I shall always believe, their honesty, that they should have so blundered,—and like all blunders was so unnecessary,—could have been so easily avoided. H.P.B.'s attitude towards D. D. Home has never been cleared up, in my mind. She never even spells his name right. Home was a weakling in many ways, a natural result of his mediumship perhaps, but he was no fraud, and the attacks on his character I never thought proved. H.P.B. admits his strong mediumship for physical phenomena, and that he escaped the critical mind and eye of Sir William Crookes was sufficient evidence to me of his genuineness.

I have already alluded to her distress over the unfortunate effect of the precipitated portrait of my sister upon my mother. The admission in her letter that "John" was responsible for the ugly feature of the portrait, and that she would resist in future calling on his aid, is at least interesting. Had she herself drawn or painted the portrait she certainly would not have introduced these grinning gnomes or monkey faces as

seen in the precipitated portrait of the Chevalier Louis. Olcott in *Old Diary Leaves* photographed some later precipitated pictures which do not show the grinning gnomes and sylphs. Her mention of Felt and his failure to disclose the secrets of the elementals is described in detail by Olcott in *Old Diary Leaves*. The entire incident was a hocus-pocus in the early history of the Theosophical Society. The Society subsequently dropped the subject, and very wisely too, and nothing was ever developed out of it.

The description of the séances of Mary Thayer, the flower medium, is further elaborated in *Old Diary Leaves*.

The most pleasing feature of the letter is H.P.B.'s expressions of friendship and good will; she showed not the slightest resentment against my father's severe criticism published in the *Banner of Light*. When the Society got well under way in India, and the great and persevering labours of the founders were shown, my father became a sympathetic onlooker, though he never joined the Society.

Letter No. 14. This is the last letter to my father. Though their differences had been patched up in a way, and though she showed not the slightest rancour over the severe criticism he published in the *Banner*, she had too many new directions given to her energy to continue the correspondence, quite aside from the *arrière pensée* that he was interested in spiritualism and not in the Theosophical Society. He did not understand the woman at the time, and certainly misjudged her after the founding of the Theosophical

Society. He did later appreciate her wonderful qualities, obscured as they were at times by her eccentricities and violent bursts of passion. Her genius and great powers could not function under emotional calm and serenity. Towards the end of her life a calm and serenity did come to her; her mind became clearer and emotionless with its greater penetration, and the dignity of the inspired teacher fell upon her.

I doubt if the casual reader of this letter could appreciate the grim humour of her imagining herself as a reincarnation of Pope Joan, one of the many examples of her ready wit and general knowledge.

She writes: "Olcott blew a loud blast on the trumpet because he knew that Phelps' experiments would come right upon his heels, *and so they did*." I puzzled some time over this allusion and only found out its meaning when she mistook the name Phelps for Wendell Phillips. In *Old Diary Leaves* (Vol. I, p. 155) Olcott wrote: "It was one of those moments when the turn of events depends upon the speaker. As it happened, I had once seen the great Abolitionist orator, Wendell Phillips, by imperturbable coolness quell a mob who were whooping and cat-calling him, and as the memory flashed within me I adopted his tactics."

Though Olcott did for the moment quell the hooting, the hooting later became louder and more insistent.

In her comparison of spiritualism with occultism H.P.B. would distinguish between them and separate them by the most cardinal differences, differences which the thinking world would not

accept. She would make the literature of occultism comparable with the precise and cogent definitions of Spinoza. Had occultism and the cabbala been based upon mathematical demonstration it would have been generally accepted to-day. But the whole philosophy of occultism and the cabbala cannot be demonstrated intellectually. You will have to go beyond the mere intellect and trust to your spiritual intuitions and the *verbum æternum*. To say that modern spiritualism is based upon hypothesis and the spiritualism of the cabbala upon a geometrical theorem, can convince us only of her own firm belief in her doctrine.

While placing Plato above Aristotle and the philosophy which reasons from universals to particulars, Aristotle cannot be given up. The laboratory of science must still work from particulars to universals. While boring in opposite directions through the mountain of doubt and the unknown, the workers may still meet and open up the light from both sides. And to-day we cannot be too sure about our Euclidean geometry, if Einstein is right. And as to hypotheses, theories, and speculations, they are all useful in a way, for often a working-hypothesis carries us over a royal road, and if not to truth, at least offers us an exhilarating exercise for our faculties.

She at least admits that Olcott's method kicked up a tremendous row on two continents, and she is aware that she had to receive all the return blows. If, as she writes, she was generally considered in the light of the daimon of Socrates towards Olcott, she should be proud of the

comparison, and I am not so sure that she did not so stand. She certainly changed Olcott from an ordinary man of the world into a hard-working honest fanatic who accomplished a great work and will long be remembered for what he accomplished. His mistakes were almost wholly in the beginning and may well be forgotten in the light of his later heroic efforts.

I may mention here his three volumes of *Old Diary Leaves : the True History of the Theosophical Society*. It is not only a true history of the Society in his lifetime but it is the best Life we have of H.P.B. He does not hesitate to tell of her weaknesses, of her contrariness at times, and of her emotional storms, and how hard it was to get along with her, but he is her truest and greatest champion, and he was longest intimately associated with her, and was a daily witness of her many powers. He has given us much evidential testimony of her phenomena, better testimony than any of her followers and admirers have given us. He was a first-class *témoin oculaire* and he could teach the S.P.R. a great deal in the field of psychical research, though they called him a dupe. As to his honesty, they never could find a flaw, however anxious they might have been to prove him dishonest. All that he wrote gave evidence of painstaking care, and conscientiousness, and he could well disregard the sneers and insinuations of that unmitigated cad Solovyoff. Cads are sometimes useful when they help to show up the fine qualities of their superiors. We should not have had H.P.B.'s "confession" without that useful member of society. It seems providential that we find him in all walks of life ;

we might almost be willing to shake hands with him occasionally. Mr. Thackeray, who delighted the world by his *Book of Snobs*, unfortunately failed to give us a similar treatise on the cad, and no one to-day seems willing to undertake the task. But a genius like Thackeray's is not common, and we may have to wait some time before one appears worthy of the undertaking.

H.P.B. at least parts with my father with a "God bless you." I should like to know the Latin quotation from one of the hypercritical Fathers of the Early Church which he sent her in his last letter. He was a great admirer of St. Augustine both in his *De Civitate Dei* and his *Confessiones*, and not unlikely he quoted from this great figure in the Church.

Letter No. 15. This letter to my mother in French may not be a pleasing one but it has the vigour of her strong personality, and while it shows her reaction to the slanders and persecutions heaped upon her, and the emotional storm under which she was suffering, it also shows that she had not forgotten the hospitality and kindness shown her by my mother and father, though word had been brought to her that he called her an impostor. Whether he did or not does not much matter now; he probably did. It shows how strong feelings were excited by antagonizing a large body of spiritualists who had transformed the phenomena of the séance room into a religion.

To antagonize emotions, and especially religious emotions, must always create a reaction and a storm which may pass all bounds of reason and

justice. Antagonism to doctrines or theories or hypotheses produces no reactions unless the emotions are involved. The mathematicians and the philosophers may differ to their hearts' content provided they leave out their emotions. The atmospheric pressure remains the same and the barometer does not change. But this woman was weak in her strength; her vigour of mind made her impulsive, violent, and fanatical, and raising the wind she reaped the whirlwind, and was swept into the cyclone. And all natures like hers suffer alike.

Dr. Madden has shown in his tables that eminent mathematicians, dwelling on the clear cold heights of the intellect, have an average duration of life of seventy-five years, while the poets, down in the heated atmosphere of imagination, have an average duration of sixty-five years only. The moral philosophers live till seventy, the dramatists only to sixty-two (quoted by Sir James Crichton-Browne). It is a wonder that H.P.B. lived to be sixty.

Letter No. 16. There is the long interval in the correspondence between March 12th, 1876, and August 28th, 1878.

This letter is chiefly of interest on account of her allusion to her second marriage. Olcott in *Old Diary Leaves* has gone into this affair in detail, and the reader who may be interested can turn to his book. He writes in conclusion: "That is the whole story, and it will be seen that it shows no criminality, nor illegality on her part, nor any evidence that she derived the slightest worldly advantage from the marriage beyond a

very modest maintenance, without a single luxury, for a few months."

The affair can be put down to the eccentricities of genius; many women without genius have done the same foolish thing.

She still shows the same freedom from any resentment against my father, but on the contrary greets him with affection.

My mother had evidently written to her for a letter of introduction to Aksakof, which she at once sends her, and at the same time bids her farewell. My mother was interested in the Russian language and literature, and thought a trip to Russia would aid her. If my memory serves me, the Countess Tolstoi dissuaded her from undertaking the journey on account of certain inconveniences and possible difficulties.

I was at the time in Vienna busy with my medical studies, and I regretted missing the opportunity of meeting her relatives.

Her letter of introduction to Aksakof is a graceful one. Aksakof was long interested in the phenomena of spiritualism and became convinced of their reality. His position was that of the scientist, as cautious and as careful as Richet. But he went further than Richet, and was willing to accept, provisionally, at least, the spiritualistic hypothesis. I have before me his chief work: *"Animismus und Spiritismus": Versuch einer kritischen Prüfung der mediumistischen Phänomene: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Hypothesen der Hallucination und des Unbewussten. Als Entgegnung auf Dr. Ed. v. Hartmann's Werk "Der Spiritismus." Von Alexander N. Aksákow: Herausgeber des Monats-Journals "Psychische*

Studien" in Leipzig: Leipzig, Druck und Verlag von Oswald Mutze 1898.

H.P.B.'s attitude towards the Church, and especially towards the Catholic Church, she does not hesitate to express on every occasion which offers, and again when uncalled for. This letter is no exception. Though born a Russian and an aristocrat, and in the body of a woman, she is like an Asiatic or an Egyptian, born centuries ago and suddenly awakened into this modern world, with its industrial civilization, with its cast-iron conventions, and its ranges of thought confined within a Chinese Wall. Immortality was preached from the pulpit but not from the house-tops; it was more a tradition than a deep belief or conviction. She was wholly Oriental. She accepted Christ as the Emancipated Spirit and Sanctified Soul, comparable with many other liberated souls. The machinery of the Church jarred upon her; she spoke of it as "churchianity." While interested in the symbolism of the ancients, she seemed to ignore the symbolism of the Church even though she could trace it back of the Christian era; and in ignoring this symbolism she seemed to ignore its mysticism, which should have been dear to her. She writes of going against *idolatry* whether in the heathen or Christian religions, and regards the saints of the Greek and Latin Churches as idols, comparable with the Indian pantheon.

All cannot stand on the pinnacle of the esoteric philosophy of the East. The masses must have their symbols and their so-called idols. If they are idols they are idols in the same sense as the child "idolized" by the mother. Back of it all

there is veneration and love, combined in the higher natures with the æsthetic principle, and with the magic play of the imagination, which in its last analysis is but the formation of the mental and spiritual image. And there can be no religion without it ; it alone gives it life, it alone saves it from the dry-rot of mere intellectual dogma. I prefer the polytheism of Greece and Rome to the unimaginative sects of to-day.

Treat the life of Christ as a history or as an historical personage which many Biblical scholars would do, and He becomes lifeless ; but treat it as a beautiful story, even uncertain of its details, or even as a fairy-tale, and the Life becomes beatific, and everything is there and here, the past and the present and all time.

And this is the inconsistency of H.P.B. as a religious teacher. She is the occultist, the philosopher, and but indirectly the religious teacher. This is seen when you compare her with a modern religious teacher like Vivakananda, for example, who represented the highest philosophical teachings of the Vedanta, a Hindoo of the Hindoos who could see some good in all religions, for they were all expressions and efforts of the soul of man to reach its goal, infinite knowledge, infinite existence, and infinite bliss.

Some may say that H.P.B. had not a Christian bone in her body, and yet she could forgive her enemies, could bear no malice or rancour against her traducers, which is a greater Christian virtue, and much more difficult to accomplish, than the observance of the conventionalities.

As she advanced in years this virtue became more pronounced. This combined with her great

intellectual vigour and deep knowledge of her beloved subject, vitalized by her genius, made her adorable to all those who came in intimate touch with her.

These letters were written during a transition period in her life. Her real intellectual activity had just begun with the writing of *Isis Unveiled*. But even in these letters, if the reader will overlook certain careless and grating phrases, and some inconsistencies, and certain emotional follies of expression, he may still see gleams of the vigour of her mind and the play of her undoubted genius.

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